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DENNIS H. WRONG
How Critical Is Our Condition?
The Left and Liberals in America

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The Many Trials of Jacobo Timerman

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Poland: The Life of Solidarity

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The Faurisson Affair — and Noam Chomsky

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Why Reading Tests Don't Test Reading



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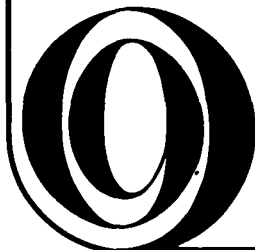
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John H. Barton. As practiced in the last two decades, arms control can provide some, but only very limited, help in maintaining peace; this is the conclusion that emerges from this evaluation of the capabilities and limitations of arms control. Substantial reductions in weapons are extremely desirable, but the author suggests that the current arms control approach is politically unable to produce such reductions, as confirmed by the SALT negotiations and the withdrawal of the draft SALT II treaty. After reaching this pessimistic judgment, the author considers possible changes in the arms control process. He examines the problem of enforcement, reviewing possible arms control applications to identify situations in which a favorable interplay between large-scale military police forces and less dramatic procedures can be achieved. The resulting new arms control agenda includes international organization reform, new kinds of expert groups, and new forms of international military consultation. For all these innovations he suggests politically plausible first steps. \$18.50



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A.V. Antonov-Ovseyenko

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"A remarkably powerful evocation of the age of Gulag—one of the most vivid evocations of the experience of totalitarianism I have ever read."
—Irving Howe



The reader is opening a book about terrible historical crimes. Its style and contents are not the product of academic dispassion but of personal experience, forbidden research, and anger that these crimes are still covered up by the Soviet government. It is a book written, the author tells us, as "a duty to those who died...to those who survived...to those who will come after us." Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko is a 60-year old survivor....

Harper & Row

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Joseph Clark

Once Again, Nuclear Disarmament

From Douglas MacArthur to George Kennan

Perhaps there are some people in politics who might disagree with the Nobel Laureate and father of the Soviet H-bomb, Andrei D. Sakharov, when he writes in *A Letter from Exile*, "I feel that the questions of war and peace and disarmament are so crucial that they must be given absolute priority even in the most difficult circumstances." Now that Hitler, Stalin, and Mao are no longer with us it's hard to think of anyone, anywhere, who would disagree with Sakharov's declaration that "nuclear war . . . is the greatest peril confronting the modern world."

That being so, and stepping away from the problem itself, just looking at it as though it were a work of art, one can't help but be astonished that so little has been done to eliminate the danger of nuclear war. Thirty-six years ago the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and then a second one on Nagasaki. The city of Hiroshima reported that more than 200,000 died as a result of a single bomb. Terrain and the lesser size of Nagasaki reduced destruction there to 39,000 killed, 25,000 injured. Those bombs have been superseded, of course, by hydrogen bombs, which make the original A-bombs seem "puny" by comparison. President Carter reminded us that a *single* nuclear-armed submarine can fire missiles capable of destroying all the large and medium-sized cities of the Soviet Union.

Twenty-six years ago, one of our country's most conservative military leaders concluded that the atomic bomb had made war obsolete. He said that no military commander could ever again hope to achieve any military objectives in a major war. It was General Douglas MacArthur who showed the inescapable necessity for a Soviet-American agreement to ban the bomb and outlaw war. MacArthur was an unlikely source for that viewpoint

since in the Korean War he had proposed the use of atomic weapons against the North Koreans and Chinese.

The general's argument is as timely today as it was in 1955, when he startled an American Legion audience in Los Angeles with his categorical imperative. MacArthur began by tracing the development of weapons in his own lifetime. When he entered the army, the target was one enemy casualty at the end of a rifle or bayonet. Then came the machine gun, designed to kill by the dozen. After that, heavy artillery raining death by the hundreds. Then the aerial bomb, to strike by the thousands. This was "followed by the atomic explosion to reach the hundreds of thousands. Now, electronics and other processes of science have raised the destructive potential to encompass millions."

"This very triumph of scientific annihilation," MacArthur said, "destroyed the possibility of war being a medium of *practical* settlement of international differences." No longer can it lead to "international power and wealth." The loser is annihilated but, "If you win, you stand only to lose," and "no longer does it possess the chance of the winner of a duel—it contains rather the germs of double suicide."

Abolishing war, MacArthur said, is "the one issue upon which both sides can agree, for it is the one issue upon which both sides will profit equally. It is the one issue—and the only decisive one—in which the interests are completely parallel."

SOME AGREEMENTS have been reached on nuclear arms in the past. Under President Kennedy above-ground testing by both the Soviet Union and the United States was banned; this 1963 pact has held. There were small advances, at least toward the

objective of limiting strategic nuclear arms, in SALT I negotiated under President Nixon in 1972. This was painfully advanced by SALT II after the Carter administration's proposal in 1977 for actual reduction in nuclear arms was rejected by the Soviets. A depressing aspect of this effort—one-sided though it was and tilted toward an American "advantage"—was that both from right and left the initiative for nuclear arms reduction was condemned. SALT II foundered after both doves and hawks, for opposite reasons, of course, roasted it in the Senate. But primarily the demise of SALT II was caused by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Then came the Reagan administration, pledged to the defeat of SALT II and ready to undertake a race for nuclear (and conventional) arms superiority between the Soviet Union and the U.S. So, in the long record of failure; blame should be attached to both sides. The simple even-handed

condemnation of both sides will, however, obscure a fundamental reason for failure. It was described in Sakharov's *Letter*:

But in order to assess the situation properly it is imperative to take note of the particular features of the Soviet Union—a closed totalitarian state with a largely militarized economy and bureaucratically centralized control, all of which make the growing might of such a country even more dangerous. In more democratic societies, every step in the field of armaments is subjected to public budgetary and political scrutiny and is carried out under public control. In the Soviet Union, all decisions of this kind are made behind closed doors and the world learns of them only when confronted by *fait accompli*. Even more ominous is the fact that this situation applies also to the field of foreign policy, involving issues of war and peace.

Perhaps the earliest indication that the Soviets bore more than an equal share of responsibility for

A Triumph for Reaction

Or Would You Say Counterrevolution?

We ought to have a clear idea of what is happening in this country. In the few months since Ronald Reagan took office, there has occurred a large-scale retrogression. In depth and scope, this is almost as significant as the steps taken toward a welfare state during the early days of the New Deal. Elements of the welfare state (such as it's been . . .) remain, of course, but significant parts have been lopped off and, David Stockman assures us, more will go.

How shall we describe this? The *New Republic* says it's not a counterrevolution, only a triumph for reaction. OK; we'll go along with that distinction, though it won't make anyone happier.

To itemize all the reactionary steps the Reagan administration has taken would be superfluous: our readers see the papers. The reigning wisdom is simple: *To those who have, much more shall be given*, and maybe a little will drip down to the rest of us. Or maybe not.

A few quick observations:

- *When liberal politicians make promises, be skeptical; when conservative politicians make promises, believe them.* Those who said before the last election that it wouldn't make much

difference who is elected—Carter or Reagan—ought to reconsider. The difference, we now can see, is enormous.

The people running the Reagan administration are ideologues, at the moment full of high confidence, yet serious. They mean it. They are acting upon their beliefs—which distinguishes them from Jimmy Carter and his friends in at least two ways: (a) they have beliefs; (b) they are prepared to fight for these beliefs. We abominate what they are doing, but have to admit that our earlier tendency to pooch-pooch the Reagan gang as mere political cosmeticians was wrong. These people are surgeons of reaction.

- *Also wrong is the inclination some of us may have had to suppose that the progress of the welfare state takes a smooth Fabian course, increment by increment.* Not so. Insofar as the welfare state is an arena for socio-political struggle, you can say that what's happening now bears a pretty close resemblance to old-fashioned class struggle—with the corporate interests reaping the immediate benefits. That doesn't mean Wall Street directs every move. Segments of sophisticated opinion on Wall Street are skeptical. They fear that, in a year or two, the Reagan economic program will be shown up as a placebo, though that doesn't keep them from licking their chops over immediate benefits.

The welfare state, reaching a certain point, may even exacerbate social struggle—see

the nuclear arms race came with their rejection of the Acheson-Lilienthal Plan, more popularly known as the Baruch Plan. As French historian Andre Fontaine puts it:

The Baruch Plan was based on a very daring concept. For the first time in history a government suggested that the possession of an essential source of industrial and military power transcended national sovereignty. It was nothing less than a proposal to turn over to an international organization the authority for atomic development, the ownership of uranium and thorium mines and ores and the operation of the extraction plants, which would be distributed equitably throughout the world. . . . An international control body would see that no one could produce bombs secretly.

This was at the beginning of 1946, years before the Soviets had the bomb and when the American monopoly was nevertheless a singularly ineffective means for containing Soviet expansionism. It is

small consolation, considering the menace of nuclear destruction, to know that the Soviets, more than the United States, are responsible for the continuing peril. Nevertheless, the Reagan administration seems to be satisfied with the record of history. It has put forward the proposition that control, limitation, reduction of nuclear arms are primarily a Soviet need and that we will undertake negotiations only when the Soviets show that they can "behave." The obvious *mutual* interest in nuclear arms agreements seems to elude this Administration.

The egregious timing of the Reagan administration's announcement that the U.S. is producing and stockpiling neutron bombs has dismayed our European allies. In my opinion the criticism of the neutron bomb as a morally more disreputable nuclear weapon than the giant H-bombs is bad logic and worse ethics. What is sinister about the Administration's neutron bombshell is that it

Thatcherite England. If there can be notable moves forward, there can be notable moves backward. It's true that class struggle becomes more politicized. Right now, the American bourgeoisie is showing itself to be supremely class-conscious. Perhaps it has finally learned the lesson James Burnham and, more recently, Irving Kristol have been laboring to teach it: ideology pays off.

- *The opposition, so far, has been pitiable.* The shame of the Democrats is not that they lost the congressional battles, but that in trying to hold conservative votes, they ceded in advance most of the issues to the Reagan people. Losing honor, the Democratic leadership gained only defeat. It doesn't know that, even from purely pragmatic considerations, a principled stand may be more advantageous than making deals so sleazy you end up looking like those you're supposed to be against.

- *The labor movement is in greater jeopardy than at any point during the past half-century.* Not that the government will systematically go out to destroy the AFL-CIO; but it is creating an atmosphere in which the corporations—pretty soon, it seems, there may be One Big Corporation—feel cocky enough to give the unions a smash in the face. The air controllers' union—inexperienced, rash, isolated—may have made tactical blunders; but the eagerness of the Reagan administration to throw the book

at the controllers tells us something (in contrast to other strikes by government employees, where patience was shown and efforts to negotiate continued).

The AFL-CIO did very little. Perhaps it could do no more, I can't say. Perhaps the major unions with membership in the airports were afraid they couldn't rally enough support among their members.

Right now the labor movement looks to be in real trouble. If so, it's probably good that the UAW has gone back into the AFL-CIO. It's a time for mutual defense.

- *But more, it's a time for programmatic work.* Rallies, outcries of indignation, conferences are all very well. But what the liberal-left needs is to emulate the New Right, not just in publicity techniques, but in doing preparatory political-intellectual work. Intelligent labor people ought to recognize this. Our side needs two or three years of sustained programmatic development, just as the right did.

How long will this reactionary trend continue? Barring a sudden recession, I'd say for some time. The right is full of confidence, it has an agenda, and a lot of popular support. The opposition needs to fight, of course, but it needs most of all to consider the terms of fighting. A change will come—given the volatility of American political culture, that is certain. It is by no means certain that the liberal-left will be ready for it.

I.H. □

comes at the very moment when negotiations are supposed to get under way on the emplacement of medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe. The aim should be to inhibit, not encourage, a race to stockpile more and more nuclear weapons. As though the European neutralist movement disrupting the Western Alliance is not bad enough, comes the Reagan-Weinberger ploy to accelerate such disruption.

There is, however, a more potent argument that is made to reassure us about avoidance of nuclear war. Shortly after World War II we were inundated with prophecies that within two or three decades World War III would be upon us and it would be a nuclear war. Why hasn't it happened?

Orwell, Thou Should'st Be Living at This Hour

We take the following item from the excellent Catholic magazine Commonweal:

In our July 3 issue we ran an editorial called "The Pakistan Bomb." In it we argued against giving President/Dictator Zia of that nation \$3 billion primarily in military aid, citing as one of our reasons that the United States had failed to extract from Pakistan any pledge that it would give up its drive for a nuclear bomb and adding that officials of the Reagan administration seemed unperturbed by that fact. A day or two after the issue containing that editorial went into the mail, Under Secretary of State James L. Buckley testified on the subject in the Senate. The following verbatim excerpt is taken from the account of that testimony in the *New York Times*:

WASHINGTON, June 24—Pakistan has given the Reagan administration "absolute assurances" that it is neither developing nor planning to develop nuclear weapons, Under Secretary of State James L. Buckley said today.

"I was assured by the ministers and by the President himself that it was not the intention of the Pakistan Government to develop nuclear weapons," he told a Senate Government Affairs subcommittee.

Mr. Buckley added that Pakistan, which has not signed a 1968 treaty to curb the spread of nuclear weapons technology, had made no promise not to seek a weapons-making or nuclear explosions such as one by India in 1974.

"One has to make a distinction between the nuclear option and nuclear weapon," he told the Senate panel.

Does that clear things up for you? □

The answer seems to be contained in that terrifying acronym, MAD, which stands for mutual assured destruction. In this connection, whatever one may think about Israel's action in destroying the Iraqi plant for nuclear bombs, everyone seems agreed that attention has been focused on the dangers of nuclear proliferation. Indeed, as unstable a regime as that of Pakistan is now the recipient of massive American military aid and indirect support for its nuclear arms plans.

It would be a mad world indeed that allowed mutual terror to substitute for the agreement that MacArthur wisely said is the one issue on which the interests of both sides are completely parallel. Surely initiative in the direction of such an agreement redounds to the credit of those who undertake it. However pessimistic one might be about the possibility of reaching agreement, failure to offer leadership on this paramount concern of mankind can only make the prospect bleaker. Besides, whatever happened to an American principle proclaimed at the very birth of the nation—to wit, "respect to the opinions of mankind"? The Soviets and their parties in the rest of the world call it agit-prop. Sometimes Soviet agit-prop is primitive and self-defeating. But when the Communists seize on actual fears among people and on trends that have indigenous sources, they can be effective. I was dumbfounded when the number three leader of the German Social Democrats, Herbert Wehner, declared a little more than two years ago that Soviet arms were intended only for defense. When I asked some of the spokesmen for the "left" trend within the German Social Democracy how Wehner *knew* why the Soviets were arming so strenuously, they replied: "Why, the Russians themselves told him that." It took a good deal of probing to establish that there was not a trace of irony in their explanation.

France's Socialist President François Mitterrand has given effective replies to those who suggest that the way out of the nuclear impasse is unilateral disarmament. He has reminded the world that the Soviets have been emplacing medium-range nuclear missiles aimed at the capitals of Western Europe ever since 1978—while the protests of the Communists have centered on the U.S. and NATO decision to install such missiles in the West starting in 1983!

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? It seems to me the recent speech by George F. Kennan in Washington, when he received the Albert Einstein Peace Prize, contains a sane and practical proposal. It

tries to break through the dead-end in which discussion of nuclear disarmament has ended. Kennan's address, as edited for publication in the *New York Review of Books*, starts from the same premise outlined by MacArthur, that we are dealing with "a type and volume of weaponry that could not possibly be used without utter disaster for everyone concerned." He recalls that every president of this country, "from Dwight Eisenhower to Jimmy Carter, has tried to remind us that there could be no such thing as victory in a war fought with such weapons." He emphasized the redundancy of these weapons and then reverted to a theme raised by MacArthur, questioning whether they were really weapons at all. These, Kennan reminded us, could "destroy indiscriminately the lives, the substance, the culture, the civilization, the hopes, of entire peoples." He argues that when it comes to nuclear weapons "relative advantage is illusory." Kennan can see no way out of the current dilemma "other than by a bold and sweeping departure":

... What I would like to see the President do, after proper consultation with the Congress, would be to

propose to the Soviet government an immediate across-the-boards reduction by 50 percent of the nuclear arsenals now being maintained by the two superpowers—a reduction affecting in equal measure all forms of the weapon, strategic, medium-range, and tactical, as well as all means of their delivery—all this to be implemented at once and without further wrangling among the experts, and to be subject to such national means of verification as now lie at the disposal of the two powers.

Agreements reached in the SALT II discussions and confirmed by our military leaders indicate that the means at our disposal are truly effective for monitoring adherence to or violations of such arrangements.

The only argument of any substance I have heard against the Kennan proposal is that it would encourage the unilateralists in Europe. It seems to me that such a challenge to the Soviets would accomplish the very opposite. It would reduce even further the impact of those who suggest single suicide in place of double suicide. It could lead to movement in a direction devoutly to be desired—mutual nuclear disarmament. □

Reo M. Christenson

On Taxing the Rich

Now that the left is reexamining some of its basic assumptions and the New Right is denouncing them, it is a good time to take a fresh look at the progressive income tax. How much can be said for the view of the *Wall Street Journal* on this issue? Are the rich already too burdened with taxes for the good of us all? The Reagan administration is not directly challenging the progressive income tax, but it is salivating at the prospect of scaling down the "unearned income" tax to well below the current 70 percent level. And reducing the tax bite on the wealthy in general is a high priority item among the Reagan high command.

This writer is convinced, however, that what we need are higher, not lower, taxes on the rich, and that includes much higher inheritance taxes as well

as a more steeply graduated income tax, more rigorously enforced. Informed persons have long known that loopholes have removed most of the progressivity from our graduated income tax. Higher income groups pay about the same, and often lower, income-tax rates than middle-income families. That is why Congress enacted a minimum tax of 15 percent (and an "alternative tax") a few years ago—so that the wealthy who might otherwise pay little or nothing would not go free.

To dramatize the wealth and income distribution scandal in America, I annually ask my National Issues class a question: "Judging by your own standards of justice and fairness, whatever your criteria may be, what should be the maximum spread between the after-tax income of the

best-paid members of our society and the most poorly paid who are still working 40 hours a week at socially useful labor?"

I then place numbers on the blackboard ranging from 1-1, to 3-1, to 5-1, and 10-1, etc., on up to 100-1, with a final option of "unlimited." Consistently, over the past 15 years, the largest number of responses cluster around the 10-1 or 15-1 range. Given the current minimum wage, this would permit after-tax income ceilings of roughly \$70,000 to slightly over \$100,000. Yet hundreds of thousands of Americans receive after-tax incomes of well over \$100,000 a year and a large rapidly growing number receive over \$1 million annually. For the latter, the after-tax income differential runs from 100-1 and upward. If the students then were faithful to their own estimates of social justice, they would become radical critics of the reward system in this country.

Turning to wealth distribution in America, a similar experiment finds a high percentage of students disturbed to learn that 1 percent of the population owns almost 30 percent of the privately owned wealth—and that the top one-half of 1 percent owns as much property and assets as the lower 80 percent of the population!

How can this phenomenon not be morally offensive to thoughtful persons? The only reasons it does not seem shockingly unfair to more people are that, first, they are unaware of these damning statistics and, second, they have grown up in a society in which vast income differentials are taken for granted. They seem as natural to most Americans as trees, houses, cars, and cats. But had they been raised in a society where the income spread between the most affluent and the most

poorly paid workers was 5-1, and some brash soul proposed this spread should be 50-1 or even 100-1, they would view that person as a bit daft. You mean some people *deserve* that much more?

If the wealthy consistently made far greater contributions to the nation's welfare than others, that would mitigate (though not remove) the injustice. But the rich include parasitic real-estate speculators, lawyers who help other wealthy persons avoid income taxes and advise corporations how to outwit federal and state laws, executives who devise clever ads for Virginia Slims and Marlboros to increase the national cancer rates, pornography merchants, sharpies and shysters of every description, and manufacturers of innumerable frivolous products. It is preposterous to assume that such people are performing more valuable work than reporters, poets, truck drivers, schoolteachers, electricians, carpenters, die casters, and other skilled workers.

Of course, some of the wealthy *are* making more valuable contributions to society than the average person. But since no consensus is possible concerning the relative social value of different occupations, the least we can do is establish a highly progressive income tax that prevents the most patently undeserving from piling up vast fortunes. If this limits the earnings of the more deserving, persons with annual after-tax incomes in excess of \$100,000 do not merit excessive pity.

It is important to remember that the wealthy became so largely because of good luck. Half of them achieved wealth through inheritance. Most of the others were fortunate enough to be born with good health, high energy reserves, a better than average IQ and/or personality, or unusual creative talents. They were seldom reared in slums or ghettos; usually they were raised in homes (not of their choosing) that gave them self-confidence and stressed the importance of "getting ahead." Many of them attended good schools and the better colleges. Many just happened to be in the right place at the right time. As Lester Thurow convincingly demonstrated in *The Zero-Sum Society*, even successful entrepreneurs are mostly "lucky rather than smart or meritocratic."

The case for higher taxes on upper-income groups derives support from other sources, too. The contribution that additional income makes to human felicity and well-being is greatest at the lower end of the scale and diminishes as incomes rise. Taxes, therefore, that weigh more heavily on the rich reduce the sum total of well-being less than a flat-rate tax would. Judged by the principle

First Things First

The chairman of Procter & Gamble Co., the nation's largest television advertiser, says the company will not lend its name or advertising support to programs that feature gratuitous sex or excessive violence.

"For sound commercial reasons, we are not going to let our advertising messages appear in an environment which we think many of our potential customers will find distasteful," he said. "Beyond that, we are going to be guided by our conscience on the kind of material we sponsor."

—*Boston Globe*, June 17, 1981 □

of the greatest good for the greatest number, the progressive income tax has always made a great deal of sense.

Income, of course, matters a lot insofar as the necessities and ordinary comforts of life are concerned. But its significance decreases as incomes rise. Who really believes that those making \$200,000 a year are happier than those making \$175,000, or that those earning \$175,000 are happier than those earning \$150,000—and so on? Yet elementary as these observations are, it is surprising how many people talk and act as if this relationship really existed.

STEEPLY GRADUATED INCOME TAXES COULD make our society less crassly acquisitive and less grossly materialistic. If upper-level taxes reached near-confiscatory levels, this might reduce the obsession with wealth that afflicts so many people and is rarely slaked, whatever the fortune won. If enormous wealth were beyond reach, this might redirect many energies toward more socially constructive and personally satisfying pursuits. It would encourage the more generous, humane, and artistic qualities of the human spirit to flourish. And some of the economic abuses and consumer rip-offs, which we endure because of entrepreneurial hopes of "striking it rich," might be lessened.

Reducing the income disparity between the wealthiest and the poorest members of our society could also reduce social tensions when times are grim. While today's income and wealth differentials generate much less resentment than might be expected, the future may be different. If average real incomes cannot rise much hereafter, as many economists anticipate, dissatisfaction with the current income and wealth distribution may well mount. Particularly in a period of severe or prolonged economic distress, frustrated groups will ask more critical questions about those who have so much when they have so little. If political leaders exploit that discontent, the political turmoil that follows might well persuade the ultra-affluent that their wealth was not an unmixed blessing.

Scaling down the upper reaches of wealth also would diminish the unhealthy political power enjoyed by the wealthy in America. The Supreme Court's bizarre opinion in *Buckley v. Valeo* that the First Amendment permits the spending of unlimited sums of personal wealth in election campaigns resulted in Jay Rockefeller drenching West Virginia with \$10 million in his successful drive for reelection. There are many lesser examples of candidates spending from \$500,000 to \$1

million or more of their personal fortunes on their election bids. Moreover, the wealthy can purchase the most expensive legal talent to help them avoid taxes and can hire top-flight lobbyists to advance their interests in legislative halls. They also command a degree of deference from legislators and administrators that other do not enjoy. Needless to say, wealthy members of Congress can usually be counted on to take care of their class interests. And an increasingly high percentage of members are in that category. (Admittedly, the upper-income class has contributed some distinguished liberals to American politics but this phenomenon is the exception to the rule).

Inheritance taxes are ridiculously low and becoming lower. The federal estate and gift tax on a million-dollar estate is about \$62,000. State taxes usually add very little to that. Once the estate lawyers have worked their magic, the tax take is usually even lower than this. Lenient and porous tax laws permitting large fortunes to accumulate and pass on to heirs will become even more ill-advised as two-income professional families proliferate. We can expect inheritances to increase faster than the rate of inflation, worsening our maldistribution of wealth.

Get the Government Off Our Backs?

As part of the Administration's more restrictive public information policy, the Justice Department has tightened disclosures under the Freedom of Information Act, and the White House is structuring key advisory panels, such as the Presidential Coordinating Task Force on Federalism, so they do not fall under the public meeting rules of the Advisory Committee Act.

The final component of the post-Watergate package is Attorney General William French Smith's announced determination to try to abolish the 1978 law requiring him to appoint special prosecutors to investigate alleged crimes by the President and Federal officials.

Mr. Smith and the Justice Department are also central to the probusiness revisions suggested for antitrust and corporate bribery laws. One proposal is to do away with the record-keeping requirement in the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, making it harder to prosecute bribery in international business deals.

—New York Times, July 3, 1981 □

One need not belabor the point that large inheritances are wholly incompatible with the supposedly cherished American value of equal opportunity. No one deserves to start out with a fat nest egg while others must start from scratch. To permit inheritances large enough to raise and educate children through college is one thing; it may even be desirable to allow all but the largest farmers and businessmen to pass on their property to their sons and daughters—so long as they actually run those enterprises instead of selling or leasing them. But the upcoming \$600,000 federal tax exemption on all estates is a giant step backward.

Conservatives are fond of noting that the personal qualities promoting success are not fairly distributed by nature; equal opportunity, therefore, can never exist. But the accidents of IQ, health, personality, family background, etc. are largely beyond our capacity to control. We can't do much about them, but we *can* do something about large inheritances. So why not do it?

THE DEFENSES OF WEALTH designed by the Reagan camp largely come down to three arguments:

- (1) Lower taxes on upper income groups will lead to greater savings, augmented capital formation, more investment in new plants and equipment, more jobs, improved productivity, and a higher standard of living for all.
- (2) To promote personal incentive, taxes on the higher income groups should be reduced.
- (3) People have a "right" to keep the fruits of their labor rather than be subject to "punitive" taxes.

Let us examine each of these propositions.

Lester Thurow noted in 1976 that "... if you subtract housing investment from total capital investment, more than 99 percent of real capital investment funds took the form of corporation-

retained earnings or depreciation allowances in 1973." Whether or not this percentage currently obtains, there is widespread agreement that the overwhelming bulk of capital investment comes from corporation funds, insurance, and pension funds. What is not well understood is that not much venture capital comes from the rich; they are normally very conservative investors rather than risk takers. If we imposed severely progressive taxes on those earnings, say, over \$100,000 a year, the impact on venture capital would be minor. A good deal of venture capital comes from corporations that invest marginal funds in high-risk but potentially high-return enterprises. Most of the rest comes from people earning less than \$100,000 a year.

If we need more capital investment than the system is able to generate under a highly progressive income tax, reductions in corporate taxes are far more likely to achieve the desired result than reductions in the tax on upper incomes. Although there is no agreement on this point among economists, there is a strong possibility that most corporation taxes are passed on to the consumer.

America is saving a much lower percentage of its income than some other industrialized nations and this is undoubtedly a serious matter. But inflation is the major deterrent to higher levels of savings; the current tax levels have very little to do with it. When our maximum taxes were 92 percent on unearned income and 70 percent on earned income, our national savings were proportionately higher than they are today—and inflation was minimal at that time.

The incentive argument has some merit but not nearly as much as conservatives generally believe. Even if the taxes on upper-level incomes were very steep, the most creative members of our society would be likely to remain creative, simply because creativity, so to speak, is in their blood. They enjoy the creative process and would be restless and unhappy if they failed to respond to the deepest springs of their nature. Workaholics will remain workaholics even if tax rates are raised. They can't help being what they are.

Let us assume, however, that monetary incentives for upper-income persons are more of an economic spur than I have implied. Still, other incentives exist. Top executive personnel are seldom indifferent to prestige, and that is not usually maintained unless they do good work and remain in the upper echelons of the firm. If they slack off because the tax bite seems burdensome, ambitious persons with lower incomes and a lower position

They Can't Take That Away from Us

- Mr. Brzezinski dismissed arguments that the growing military ties between Peking and Washington would feed Soviet fears of encirclement. If the Soviet Union moves toward the Persian Gulf and tries to detach Western Europe from the United States, he said, the new ties become "a major counterpoint." □

in the corporate hierarchy will be eager to win their post. If they begin coasting, they may coast right out of their jobs. And if prestige is important, so is power. Power is usually won, sustained, or enhanced by doing a job well and, above all, by holding one of the top decision-making positions. To assume that money is more important than power and prestige is to misread most people's nature. Institutional status is coveted and cherished even if the higher pay associated with it is subject to very high levels of taxation.

Herman Miller has written that "there is virtually no scientific evidence to support the view that the incentives of the rich to accumulate would be destroyed if they were taxed more heavily." And Professor Thurow observes that

... all the empirical evidence points in the same direction. Surveys of work behavior, econometric studies of work decisions ... all indicate that current inequalities are much larger than those necessary to produce and expand the current GNP. The tax system ... could be made more progressive and, if anything, work efforts would increase rather than diminish.

(I am not wholly persuaded of the latter, but my doubts lack a solid empirical base.)

West Germany and Japan are among the most productive societies in the world, and the differential between the top tenth and the bottom tenth of income in those countries is 11-1 and 10-1, respectively, compared to 15-1 in the U.S. This suggests that substantially higher taxes on the rich would not erode the dynamism of our system, a probability reinforced by the fact that America's savings, capital investment, and productivity made a better showing when the income tax scale was higher than it is today. Not that high taxes are a positive economic factor, but the roots of human effort are far more complex and resilient than conservatives realize.

Friendship

The Wall Street Journal of July 2, 1981 reported that ex-President Nixon held bimonthly meetings with important people at his Manhattan townhouse. But—

"There are still plenty of people Mr. Nixon would like to have over: William F. Buckley, Jr. still hasn't been able to fit dinner into his schedule, and Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary*, whom Mr. Nixon has said he would like to get to know, hasn't been invited over yet."

Maybe they could come together? □

THE CONVICTION THAT SOCIETY has no "right" to impose "punishment" taxes can be readily dismissed. Among the "rights" of man, reputable philosophers have never included the privilege of keeping whatever portion of one's wealth that one personally thinks is fair. One acquires wealth because society has created an orderly social system with law enforcement agencies, courts, torts, the obligation of contract, the privilege of forming corporations, national defense forces, etc. If society creates the framework within which one earns a living, society can also impose whatever economic restraints and whatever limits upon the acquisition of wealth that its members believe are in the public interest. The opportunity to become wealthy does not remotely belong in the same category of human rights as the right to freedom of speech, press, assembly, religion, travel, and due process.

Those who contend that it is metaphysically wrong to place any limit upon the individual's right to acquire wealth imply that no conceivable maldistribution of wealth could be unjust. Not even, presumably, if 1 percent of the population received 90 percent of all income. But when faced with this uncomfortable hypothesis, conservatives shy away from specifying the point at which their sense of unfairness would be triggered. That is too painful to contemplate, for it implicitly challenges some of their most cherished prejudices.

A favorite debating tactic among defenders of the rich is to point out the folly of trying to impose total equality upon a society. Of course, cogent arguments can be advanced against such a social order, but who is proposing that? Can one cite a single prominent liberal, radical, or socialist who seeks that outcome? A differential, say, of 10-1, except for the greediest of souls, is a handsome differential indeed.

It is safe to assume that only a tiny percentage of college students—or of other Americans—have ever been exposed to the major facts about wealth and income distribution in America, and to the arguments for altering that distribution. Articles in political or economic journals almost never engage in serious analysis of the subject. As for the American people, they are oblivious to the issue because the politicians never raise it. Not even the liberals have dared to. All that should change. It's time to launch the kind of debate that can prevent the Reagan administration from making our scandalous situation even worse. It's time, also, to lay the groundwork for sweeping liberal tax reforms once the political winds have changed. □

Michael Walzer

Totalitarianism vs. Authoritarianism

The Theory of Tyranny, the Tyranny of Theory

We don't customarily reprint from American publications, least of all one like the New Republic, which at least some of our readers are likely to see. But in the current discussion about U.S. foreign policy (the Jeane Kirkpatrick-Commentary theory about supporting authoritarianism against totalitarianism) we think Michael Walzer's article in the July 4-11, 1981 New Republic especially cogent. So here it is, for those of our readers who didn't see it. — I. H.

Every political theorist hopes that his concepts and distinctions will turn, magically, into common currency, so that men and women on the street will talk exactly as he does. And he fears at the same time that his work will be distorted, corrupted, appropriated for partisan uses over which he has no control. Most of the theorists who first worked out the concept of totalitarianism in the late 1940s and the early 1950s lived to see both their hopes and fears fully realized. "Totalitarian" quickly became a cold war tag, our everyday name for the Communist regimes of the East. By contrast, we described ourselves and our allies in those innocent days with words like "free" and "liberal"; our governments were "constitutional." The struggle had this form: the free world against communism, limited government against totalitarianism—a fantasy version of what political theory is all about.

Today we are too sophisticated for such simple distinctions, or too cynical. We know that the free world includes a large number of brutal and repressive regimes. These are "our" dictatorships, many of which, to the naked eye, don't look all that different from "theirs." But the new cold warriors of the 1980s want to draw the line exactly as it was drawn in the 1950s. So they have dug deeper into the original theory, looking for richer conceptual plunder. And indeed, as the theory was worked out by writers like Hannah Arendt and Carl Friedrich, totalitarianism was not contrasted with freedom. There was, after all, nothing new about unfree government. Most states through most of human history have been unfree; most still

are. Totalitarianism was a radically new kind of unfreedom, a new species of the genus "tyrannus," different from all the others. This was the difference on which the theorists focused their attention, and it played a part too in political debates among small groups of leftist intellectuals struggling to understand Stalinist terror. But it was a difference largely ignored in the official ideology of the cold war.

Now, however, it has been taken up by the new cold war ideologists, led, for the moment, by our representative to the United Nations. Yes, they say, many of our allies are tyrants and always have been. But these are ordinary, old-fashioned tyrants. The real enemy, the present danger, is totalitarianism, that is, communism. And for the sake of the struggle against communism, we must make our peace with tyranny. Authoritarian regimes in South Korea or Guatemala or Argentina are not so bad when compared with Russia or North Vietnam or Cuba. (China, with which, it appears, we must also make our peace, tends to get overlooked in these discussions.) We must not allow moralistic qualms about routine oppression—the tyrants always ye have with you—to get in the way of our outrage at what is truly new and truly dangerous. Compared to the cold war rhetoric of the 1950s, this sort of talk represents, I suppose, a more sophisticated appropriation of the original theory. It is not, however, a less corrupt one.

The original theory still has genuine value. Totalitarianism is indeed a new kind of tyranny, not entirely without precedent in the long history of tyranny, but new nonetheless. Partly its novelty

consists in nothing more than a radical improvement in bureaucratic and police control, the introduction of a more advanced technology of surveillance: old tyranny with new machinery. One of the most frightening features of Orwell's *1984* was the two-way television screen. But machines are of little use without the will to use them, and what is most novel and most important about totalitarianism is the peculiarly modern ambition of its leaders: to control everything, to wipe out not merely opposition, but every form of difference, recalcitrance, hesitation, private doubt, and caution, to create an entirely new order and even a new kind of human being. Hence the need to penetrate every aspect of social life, religion, culture, and family, to seize every secondary association, to supervise all communication between persons, all movement between places, all thought and all feeling. Older tyrannies were marked by a more limited ambition. Their leaders wanted simply to stay in power, to enjoy the fruits of power, for as long as possible. They were a danger to rivals and opponents, but private life, traditional routines, passive minorities were generally (not always) safe from their interventions.

That is a key distinction and it remains, to my mind, a useful guide to 20th-century politics. But it can't just be applied mechanically, dividing the world, for totalitarianism is an "ideal type," a picture of horrifying perfection never quite achieved in fact, while authoritarianism is a catch-all category. The idea of totality bears the marks of its discovery in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust and in the last years of Stalin's personal rule. The concentration camp, Hannah Arendt wrote, is the model of totalitarian control. The Hitler and Stalin regimes come as close as regimes have ever come to realizing that model, but even they realized it for some, not for all, of their subjects. And if we set aside the Soviet Union, where Stalinism remains today a regime-in-reserve, it is clear that all the other examples of post-World War II Communist and fascist governments are failed totalitarianisms. They don't measure up to Arendt's standard, they fall short of Orwell's brilliant science fiction, their terror isn't total. Between these regimes and other sorts of tyranny it isn't easy to draw a sharp line. And it is sheer willfulness, ideological relentlessness, to insist that this line, once it is worked out, will conform to the cold war division between East and West.

CONSIDER NOW the two major moral/political arguments of the new cold warriors. I'll take them from Jeane Kirkpatrick's *Commentary* article ("Dictatorships and Double Standards," November 1979), a particularly good example of contemporary ideology, even if it isn't, or just because it isn't, a particularly good article. The first of these is an argument about political possibility. Communist totalitarianism brings with it a long, dark night. "There is no instance of a revolutionary 'socialist' or Communist society being democratized," writes Kirkpatrick. Our own tyrants, by contrast, are sometimes replaced by democratic regimes—though it is always important for the stability of the new democracy that the replacement rate. In fact, I'm afraid, the decline in democracy in the free world is rather more noticeable than its slow advance. In any case, this is a false distinction. Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland probably would be democratic states were it not for the Red Army. The Red Army is a threat to human freedom, but communism, in these states at least, is an ugly but not all-powerful political system. There is nothing in its internal mechanics that rules out a democratic transformation. Assuming that the Russians don't intervene—an unlikely but analytically necessary assumption—the prospects for democracy are probably better, certainly no worse, in much of Eastern Europe than, to cite some of Kirkpatrick's odder examples, in Argentina, Brazil, South Korea, and Zaire. In all these cases, social structure and political culture are far more important than the current regime in shaping the long-term evolution.

The second argument is about relative brutality. Old-fashioned tyrannies, according to Kirkpatrick, because they don't set out to transform their societies, do much less damage to them. They tolerate existing patterns of misery and injustice, but at least they don't create new ones. And their subjects are accustomed to the old patterns, have long ago adjusted to them and learned how to survive. Hence "such societies create no refugees." This is the "damning contrast" between Communist regimes and "other autocracies." The massive refugee population of the modern world is largely a creation of Communist totalitarianism. It would be nice—not for the refugees but for the ideological peace of mind of the rest of us—if this were

true. But it isn't true. The refugees who fled Hungary in 1956 or Afghanistan in 1980 were fleeing the Red Army, not domestic oppression. The million Cubans who have reached our shores since the 1960s probably could be matched by a million Haitians, were the latter given a comparable welcome. And the largest single group of refugees since World War II was produced by Pakistani repression in East Bengal, which was nothing if not old-fashioned. Certainly there are Communist states that fit Kirkpatrick's account. East Germany and Cambodia are different but equally clear-cut examples. But the line she draws is a fabrication.

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN totalitarian and authoritarian regimes is a conceptual contrast, not a practical one. It doesn't conform to, nor does it justify our actual alliances. It doesn't make Kissinger's Pakistani "tilt" of 1971 smell any better. It doesn't rule out economic (or even military) cooperation with Communist China. One can't pull politics or morality out of a theoretical hat. That sort of thing is always a trick. Theory, *once we have it right*, does nothing more than shape our perceptions, guide our understanding, within the framework it provides, choices still have to be made.

The hardest choice, and the one for the sake of which the new cold war ideology has been worked out, is simply this: an authoritarian regime, old-fashioned, brutal, repressive, allied to the West, is threatened by a revolutionary movement some of whose leaders have totalitarian ambitions and/or Russian connections. What should we do? The claim of the new cold warriors is that the liberal impulse in all such cases is to support the revolutionaries or at least to desert at the first opportunity the authoritarian regime. And what they want instead is the opposite policy, a steadfast commitment to the regime, because totalitarianism is the greater danger, the irreversible transformation, and so on.

But this is to turn policy into a reflex of ideology (disguised as theory). There just isn't going to be one answer in cases like the one I've described, and to act as if there is one answer—we get it right or wrong, we win or lose—is the beginning of political disaster. Often we can't do anything at all. Or rather, our choice is the same choice that the Russians have faced again and again in Eastern Europe: send in the troops or let the local conflict

take its course. But let's assume that there is room, some limited room, for political maneuver (economic aid, military supply, diplomatic pressure, and so on). Then, obviously, the direction of our maneuvers will have to be determined by the shape of the terrain. How much popular support does the regime have? How much capacity for change? Who are the rebels and what is their "cause"? What sorts of alliances have they already made and how stable are those alliances? What are our own strategic interests in the area? That last question is generally taken to mean we should align ourselves with the established regime. In fact, however, if there really are strategic interests, and if we take them seriously, then it would seem to follow that we should line up as early as possible with the side most likely to win, so long as there is a real chance of keeping the winners out of the Russian camp. It is characteristic of the new cold warriors that they would support authoritarian governments both when it is in our interests to do so and also when it isn't—so that one is led to suspect that they just support authoritarian governments. In any case, there probably are such governments that we ought on balance to help. Otherwise, we could hardly have any relations at all with the Third World states. And there probably are oppositionists and revolutionaries whom we ought on balance to help too.

RARELY, HOWEVER, in any part of the Third World, are there going to be old or new regimes, governments, or movements to which we should be ideologically committed. We don't have to become apologists for the internal policies of our allies. What we owe them at most is critical support. Foreign policy is always a double business: we have to pursue our interests and we have to defend our values. In the long run, we hope that these two efforts come together, but at any given moment there are conflicts and contradictions. Maybe it is in our interest to support, say, the present South Korean regime. But we must also, for the sake of our values, maintain some critical distance from it. And that kind of argument doesn't work only for right-wing regimes. After 1960, it was in our interest that Cuban communism develop in, say, a Yugoslav rather than a Bulgarian direction, and we might have accomplished that, or at least assisted in it, through some sort of economic cooperation. But cooperation

would have been no excuse for a failure to criticize Castro's dictatorship, the repression of dissidents, the campaign against homosexuals, and so on.

A policy of this kind assumes that there is no long, dark night, no thousand-year Reich, no totalitarian transformation that is proof against political opposition and social change. That has to be, I think, the working assumption of any sane diplomacy. The new cold warriors exploit what we might think of as the apocalyptic features of the theory of totalitarianism. And in the 20th century it is difficult to avoid some engagement with, some hard contemplation of, apocalypse. In political terms that means that there have been and will be again regimes so evil that the only moral stand one can adopt toward them is absolute opposition. But what policies follow from that moral stand? Surely Stalin's was one such regime, and yet we fought with Stalin against the Nazis. Even evil has its degrees. We must hope—we can reasonably believe—that it also has its duration.

IN THE THIRD WORLD, at any rate, there is not likely to be much permanence—no sustained development toward modernity and liberty, but also very few stable or solidly established tyrannies. No doubt many of the tyrants will have totalitarian ambitions; the rhetoric of revolution is now the *lingua franca* of the Third World. But that only means that there will be many failed totalitarianisms. Whether these failures will be bloodier than the “other autocracies” is a question unlikely to find a yes or no answer. Some of them will and some won't. For our part, we can and should maintain a steady hostility toward every sort of

totalitarian ambition. But that is no reason for supporting the “other autocracies” or excusing their bloodiness. We can make the alliances we have to make on both sides of this shadowy line, and we can condemn when we must the internal policies of our allies. I understand, of course, that there are serious diplomatic difficulties involved in any such policy—much discussed and never overcome during the Carter years. But it is a worse policy to refuse altogether to confront those difficulties. The real danger, *the present danger*, of the new cold war ideology is that it will drive us into alliances that our material defense does not require and rule out the outspokenness that the defense of our values does require. And all this for the sake of a misunderstood and badly applied political theory!

But perhaps I overestimate the power of theory (it is a common professional mistake). One might detect among contemporary cold warriors a sneaking sympathy for “traditional autocrats [who] leave in place existing allocations of wealth, power, status, and other resources. . . .” On the far left, there is often similar sympathy for revolutionaries who upset those allocations, even if they do so only in order to establish a new tyranny—and this view, too, has its theoretical rationale. But I would propose a different sympathy: for the tortured dissidents, the imprisoned oppositionists, the threatened minorities, all the “disappeared” and murdered men and women of all the tyrannies, old and new. And we don't need a political theory to explain why we should keep these people always in the forefront of our consciousness, their names on the tip of our tongues. □

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James B. Rule

Poland—Building Socialism in One Country

I left Warsaw after a recent eight-day stay impressed above all with the fluidity of the situation and the lack of precedent for what is taking place. Yet about several important things I am sure.

First, Poland is experiencing a revolution in everything but name. Far-reaching changes are under way—both in institutions and political culture. The impulses underlying these changes are deeply democratic and antiauthoritarian.

Second, no force can now put the political clock back to where it was before August 1980. Not even Soviet tanks. The old system is too deeply discredited, and the Poles have learned too well that they can stand up to it.

Third, though no one can doubt the democratic sentiments underlying the Polish movement, these are still far from crystallized into permanent, viable institutions. What such institutions may be, and what they will have to accomplish, is of utmost import for the future of democracy and socialism.

What follows is based mainly on conversations, in English and French, with Polish intellectuals, including a number of Solidarity advisers and activists; I also had long talks with one full-time Solidarity official and with assorted Poles from other walks of life.

A VISIT TO POLAND is bound to be emotionally fraught. However lavishly one is received, one experiences some of the strain of a people that has lived for nearly a year under severe threat. In academic circles, as elsewhere, the emotional juxtapositions are brutal. One moment conversation focuses on books, conferences, promotions—the staples of academic gossip everywhere. The next moment, amid nervous laughter, people are discussing whether the new models of Soviet tanks have devices to make them impervious to Molotov

cocktails—or, with no laughter at all, how to provide for one's family in the event of invasion. A people whose history has been full of violence and foreign domination, the Poles have no illusions about what an invasion would mean. Perhaps it is a commentary on the national character that, while I could find no one willing to admit to optimism, everyone seemed determined to press on with national renewal.

For years the Communist regime has cultivated mistrust between workers and intellectuals. In 1968, students demonstrated against the regime, only to be beaten and arrested. Blue-collar workers generally stood aside. In 1970, government announcements of price rises for basic foodstuffs provoked strikes and violence from workers, ultimately propelling Gierek into power. These events began in Gdansk and left an undetermined number of dead, while the universities remained for the most part uninvolved. By 1976 the divide-and-rule policy was losing its effectiveness. The price rises of that year brought labor unrest and were quickly rescinded, but this time workers began receiving help from students and intellectuals. The Committee for Defense of Workers (KOR) was formed, and a vigorous underground movement began providing both workers and intellectuals with information otherwise unavailable through the controlled media. When the shipyard workers in Gdansk in 1980 made their revolutionary demand for independent unions, cooperation from the universities was quickly offered and accepted.

It is impossible to imagine a more apt name for the organization leading the struggle than the one it chose. The quest for solidarity, and the birth of Solidarity, manifest a determination not to be bought off by selective concessions and not to be misled by promises for reform within the existing system. The Poles have concluded that only an organization utterly free of the regime can defend

popular interests. Thus the historical development of an "independent and self-governing" association to protect the interests of the workers—and not just blue-collar workers but workers in all settings—from the "workers'" party and the "workers'" state.

Solidarity itself now embraces the great majority of all employed persons in Poland—about 9 million members of the total nonagricultural labor force of about 12 million. Nearly everyone, except the old party-state elite, seems to support the movement's goals. In its short lifetime, Solidarity has orchestrated industrial actions involving nearly the entire working population, steering a shrewd and delicate course against provocations and trickery by its elite antagonists. Its leaders learned quickly—or seemed to know a priori, since they hardly had time to learn from experience—when to press harder and when to relax their pressure.

Much has been said about the seemingly strange symbiosis of Solidarity and the Church. This relationship is less baffling when one recalls the importance of independence from the state apparatus. In a quasi-totalitarian society, any symbol or institution that appears free of control from the center is ipso facto a focus for all sorts of hopes and potentials. Thus the Catholicism of Poland, from all accounts, is as much a measure of ethnic and national fervor as a strictly religious phenomenon. The churches have been unusually full in recent months, I was told, because of an influx of nonbelievers determined to show support for their country's renewal in any way they can. Until last year, the Church was the only source of symbols whose independence from the regime was considered self-evident. Now there are two such sources, and the Poles find it natural that each should sustain the other. But it would be wrong to imagine that all the forces of change in Poland emanate from these two institutions. Renewal is breaking out everywhere, as every organization and forum is affected by people's desire for openness and democracy. One result, I was told, is that all kinds of meetings are longer and more tedious than before. People insist on full deliberation before decisions are reached. Workers everywhere are insisting on a say in management practice, including the appointment of managers. It would be misleading to say that these outbursts are the work of Solidarity; more precisely, the same sentiments fueling the successes of Solidarity are producing demands for participation and democratization throughout Poland. Even a group of police officers during my visit was seeking to form an independent association, to dissociate themselves

from outsiders who, it was claimed, had acted in the name of the police against Solidarity.

The soaring prestige of Solidarity has been in inverse measure to the standing of the old state-party elite. The history of broken promises and heavy-handed repression is not the only reason for this nearly total discredit of the old system. Perhaps even more important, in the eyes of most Poles, is the mismanagement of the economy.

The economic situation is ruinous. During my visit, long lines were chronic for meat, gasoline, cigarettes, in addition to spot shortages of such things as beer and washing detergent. No one seemed to attribute the shortages to work stoppages over the past year. People blamed government mismanagement or attempts to wear down the popular will to resist. And everyone knows that poor economic performance goes back much farther than last year's events. The housing situation, at least in major cities, is disastrous by Western standards. It is common, I was told, for divorced couples to continue living together for years before new quarters can be found; two families sharing an apartment may have little chance for separate flats if the number of rooms they occupy is considered sufficient.

Yet Poland ought to be more prosperous. The country has a skilled workforce and a sophisticated scientific and technological establishment. But it has also absorbed billions of dollars of Western investments in the last decade without adequate means to make good on them. As often happens, a regime that made itself immune to opposition also insulated itself from warnings of danger ahead, and ultimately united its own people against it.

The result of all this is a wide and deep revulsion against central economic planning. Everyone in Poland has personal experience of the wastefulness of the economy—obtuse production goals in industry, irrational pricing systems for consumer goods or bizarre staffing patterns in the workplace. Ultimately responsible for such practices, people believe, are the cadres of central bureaucrats whose *raison d'être* is their control of economic life. Thus the deepgoing conviction that decentralizing the economy and depriving this privileged group of its stranglehold would solve both political and economic problems at one stroke. No one in Poland is contemplating the reinstitution of capitalism, as far as I could tell. But people are desperate to try some form of market economy, with greatly increased responsibility for individual managers or workers' councils in the setting of production goals and norms for

work. Most Poles seem to make little distinction between democratizing the political system and putting the economy on a working basis.

The effectiveness of the threat of a widespread or general strike arises largely from what such actions could demonstrate about the economy. In strikes organized by Solidarity, workers do not simply remain off the job; they occupy and control the workplace. If the legally appointed managers appear, their authority is ignored; orders are taken only from the strike leaders. Thus the fear within the regime that a general strike, once begun, might never stop. A total takeover of all workplaces in a Solidarity-sponsored action might well make the point that the economy runs better without the dead hand of the central planners than with it. Even short of such dramatic measures, everyone is now discussing how central controls are to be loosened.

One might expect the Party to oppose any such decentralization plan unequivocally. And indeed, top figures have vociferously opposed the bolder decentralization plans. But it is no longer possible to speak of the Party as a unified force, for the same creeping democratization that has affected nearly all other institutions has taken root there as well. Most of the more than 3 million Party members enjoy neither the power nor the special privileges of the elite; the majority of lower-level members, though identified with Party policies by other Poles, until recently have had little influence over policy. Now this group will no longer abide being tarred with the same brush as their elite comrades. As July's Party congress shows, they are beginning to insist on their say. They, too, will most likely support economic decentralization, and thereby seek to reduce the old elite's power. A significant number of Party members are now members of Solidarity. I have heard the figure put at one-sixth, but I doubt that anyone knows for sure. Yet when a Solidarity member is elected to the Politburo—as happened in July—one realizes that the power monopoly is fading fast.

For the past year the regime has stumbled from crisis to crisis, seeming to promise first the Soviets, then the domestic opposition anything they sought, simply to buy time. During this period political forces both within the old elite and the movement have been testing one another, seeking to establish positions for the consolidation of power. These unsettled conditions obviously provided no basis for economic recovery.

One wonders how long this can go on. As the economic situation continues to deteriorate, lead-

ing to the brink of actual hunger for some, the need for a coherent economic program grows acute. But the Party as a whole, even in its more democratic form, is on the defensive. The more profound question is what new economic arrangements Solidarity and its supporters will seek.

SOLIDARITY AROSE as a movement of opposition and self-protection. Its success in this role won it enormous prestige. But clearly Solidarity cannot continue indefinitely to play only this part. People now expect the organization to take some definite role in putting the economy back on the rails. And this has to mean some form of participation in the exercise of power.

The choices are delicate indeed. If Solidarity continues to restrict itself to an opposition role, it may begin to lose the grass-roots confidence it has won. If it associates itself too much with the workings of the system, the result could be even worse. The regime has already made a few gestures of decentralization—derided by its critics as efforts to decentralize blame without decentralizing power. But it is difficult to imagine any way out of the current economic disaster without some sharing of responsibility for a single program between Solidarity and the regime. What kind of program can Solidarity afford to be associated with?

Perhaps the boldest, most radical answer is a plan under discussion by some Solidarity activists and advisers. Under this plan, organized workers, led by Solidarity, would simply take over the economic life of the country unilaterally, in a kind of *coup d'économie*. This is what the regime seems to fear from a general strike—a strike that actually ends up running the economy, bypassing the entire apparatus of state control. In a situation as fluid and desperate as the present, such a quasi-anarcho-syndicalist move might well enjoy enormous immediate popular support. It would obviously represent the clear break that many Poles desire with the central bureaucracy. But it might also strip away the last fig leaf of Communist orthodoxy before the horrified eyes of the Soviets, and so precipitate what nearly everyone in Poland fears most.

A less sweeping plan, apparently enjoying broader support in Solidarity circles, would institutionalize the submission by workers' representatives of plans and demands relating to economic life. Such plans would go regularly to government agencies for implementation, while workers' organizations would monitor them. Like virtually all schemes for economic reform, this would entail

considerable autonomy for local decision-making by managers and workers' representatives in individual factories. The idea of making unions the source of economic policy and the means of its supervision, while leaving implementation formally in the hands of state agencies, is intriguing. It obviously aims at enabling Solidarity to walk a thin line between turning its back on economic policy and accepting a degree of responsibility that could be compromising.

Another idea, potentially feasible in conjunction with the above, would be to create something like a new parliamentary body of workplace representatives, to concern itself exclusively with economic policy. Such a plan would aim at destroying the power of elite central planners over the economy. And it would presumably leave other, existing institutions to carry out remaining state functions, including foreign relations and relations with other Communist parties.

MANY PROFOUND CHANGES in political and economic life are already well advanced. They are often nearly invisible, for they arise from the revitalization of institutions and practices that are democratic in principle but lately suppressed. The percolating democratization of the last year has often taken the form of reclaiming democratic possibilities made moribund in recent decades. For example, the revolution within the Party has consisted of its representatives actually *representing*, originating political initiatives from below, rather than transmitting pressure downward against those they are supposed to represent. One sociologist suggested to me that, if this process of democratization went far enough, Solidarity could ultimately afford to disappear—its protective and representative functions assumed by the institutions supposed to exercise them in the first place. This was a rhetorical suggestion, I think; no one is going to trust the old institutions, however enlivened by recent trends, without an independent counterweight.

Any new arrangements will require some sort of accommodation between Solidarity and the Party. One of the most acute commentaries I heard was by an economic historian serving as adviser to Solidarity. He envisaged the emergence of what he termed a "hybrid" political system, an institutionalized sharing of power between Solidarity, Party, and state. Solidarity would presumably exercise its greatest say in matters related to work life, while other institutions would concern themselves with foreign policy and other affairs. Relations

between Solidarity and older institutions would necessarily entail some mixed pattern of conflict and cooperation. This would obviously represent an unusual blend of political and economic forms, but perhaps no more eclectic than those found in Yugoslavia, Mexico, and other countries.

WHAT ARE the movement's chances for success? Assuming that the present evolution is allowed to continue, does *any* imaginable set of institutions promise both to defend democracy and to build economic rationality and prosperity?

It would be comforting to believe that the only threat to these goals comes from reactionary forces—what is left of the Old Guard in Poland and the nervous "friends" in the Soviet bloc. But the potential for conflict among the goals of the Polish movement is considerable in itself. Everyone in Poland, for example, wants to see the economy grow more productive and efficient. But any program of economic reform will have to confront what is, by all accounts, considerable hidden unemployment throughout the economy. It is hard to see how progress can come without some redistribution of workers from less productive to more productive roles. Responding to such needs will not be easy for a movement arising as a system of workers' self-defense.

Equally agonizing questions surround the place of agriculture. Farming is largely unmechanized; in a day's drive through the countryside I saw scores of draft horses but not a single tractor. Institution of market relations and economic decentralization would obviously call into question the system of subsidies supporting such inefficient agriculture. Prices of foodstuffs would rise, yet farm incomes would drop. At length, peasants would be driven off the land. This might ultimately afford more efficient mechanized, large-scale agriculture, but the human costs of such a transition would be staggering. Thus there is no reason to believe that the role of agriculture in an industrial economy will be any less troublesome for some new form of Polish socialism than it has been in any other European country, East or West.

Nor can establishment of markets in an economy until now enveloped in a labyrinth of state regulation be anything but bruising and disorienting at first. The long-term vision is persuasive—more efficient production and distribution, coupled with freedom from the meddling of central bureaucrats. But markets will not spring forth without a period of trial and error, as all elements of a

complex economy seek to dispose of their products and services at prices others are prepared to pay. Some sectors of the economy may find little demand for their contributions, while others find themselves wielding extraordinary market power. How a movement seeking the welfare of all in freedom from excessive state power will deal with such inequities remains to be seen.

Similarly, how will a new, more democratic order cope with conflicting demands from different elements of the population? If workers' councils and local managers are free to allocate scarce resources among such competing goals as increasing productivity, raising wages, improving working conditions, or reducing pollution, how will the interests of consumers and neighboring populations be represented? Or, how will resources be allocated, under conditions of decentralization, between export industries generating urgently needed foreign exchange and other organizations, such as health care, making other kinds of contributions to the national well-being?

Polish wages and salaries are significantly stratified now, both among occupations and sectors of the economy. Decentralization could well make them even more so. For example, a plumber employed in mining may be paid much more than a plumber employed by a school. Discretion by local managers or workers' councils as to allocation of wages could sharpen such differences. A movement that early on sought greater rises in pay for lower-paid workers will, once endowed with a share of power, have hard decisions to make about the growth of wage differentials.

Even in a relatively decentralized economy, some key decisions will have to be made by institutions representing the system as a whole. What areas of the economy should receive new investments? What are the maximum permissible differences in remuneration? What are the responsibilities of industries for environmental protection? One can envisage all sorts of democratic possibilities for resolving such problems, but all would seem to require some degree of central control over economic activity. And accepting such control will obviously pose problems for a movement whose origins lie in resisting central power.

I do not think any of these problems insoluble, though I am unsure how seriously Solidarity supporters have taken them thus far. Resolving potential contradictions such as these will require agonizing choices, choices that can only come through establishing new balances of power among different elements of Polish society, and indeed

among different elements of the movement headed by Solidarity. One hopes that this can occur without leaving Solidarity unworthy of its well-chosen name. But I believe that the Poles have as good a chance of retaining their democratic and egalitarian principles as any people who have ever made a revolution. Concrete historical experience has taught the lesson that no class or sector can flourish unless all flourish. None of my experiences in Poland led me to think this lesson is soon to be forgotten.

ALL THESE SPECULATIONS about the future of the Polish movement, of course, presume that there will *be* a future. It is axiomatic for the Poles that their closest neighbors have the power to crush them at any moment. Yet the intentions of the Soviets seem no clearer in Warsaw than they do in New York.

It is hard to know how the Soviets perceive their own interests. Are they hoping that Polish economic reform will succeed, so as to relieve them of further strain to their own economy from a bankrupt client? Or do they welcome economic chaos in Poland as a "lesson" to other East European countries? Do they believe themselves more likely to be threatened by continuation of the Polish experiment, or by the military, economic, and political complications that would arise from an attempt to stop it? No one in Poland appears to know the answers; perhaps they are in dispute even in Moscow.

For the moment, time seems to be on the side of the Poles. As the renewal process gathers steam, it gains ever more credibility and prestige. Now even the most reactionary Party hacks might be unwilling to stand as Moscow's viceroys over an occupied Poland. The Polish army would be likely to join the rest of the nation in resisting an invasion. Solidarity officials told me that preparations are being made to retain communications and decision-making capabilities within their organization, even if its top leaders are arrested or killed. The cost to the Soviets of an invasion would be staggering. Military action might destroy Poland but still not be able to create the kind of regime the Soviets would like.

Faced with a choice between scorched earth on their Western frontier and an aberrant political situation, the Soviets may then choose the latter. No one knows. The Poles keep anticipating the worst but pressing on with their plans. They know exactly what they are up against, yet they will not give up. They are enormously brave. □

Mitterrand's Victory: Politics of the Left

Paris

Why did François Mitterrand, after winning an absolute majority in the Assembly, take Communists into his government, thereby risking difficulties with foreign leaders and possibly causing some second thoughts among his center-left constituency? The fact is that, whatever one may think of his action, it is quite consistent and reflects a policy defined almost 20 years ago. This policy is to unite the left, and it also aims at bringing the influence of the Communist party back to what should be its normal level in a nation such as France. This latter goal is what has been called altering the balance within the left. For a long time, the Communists have been accusing Mitterrand of trying to use them as a reserve, so to speak, and have been quoting what he had said on the subject at the Socialist International meeting—in 1972 if I am correct—about wanting to bring the French CP down to 15 percent. Concealed behind these two goals of uniting the left and cutting the CP down to an acceptable size, there is something else. It is to tame the CP, to “social democratize” it, as it were, to stop it from being a constant source of political unrest and social imbalance.

The strategy of uniting the left is based on two facts. First, since the early days of the French Republic, the center-left failed in all its attempts to govern, be it with Mendès France, Guy Mollet or, in a slightly different context, with Chaban Delmas. Mendès France was thrown out by the right and by his own friends in the Radical party after he had finished with the Vietnamese problem; Guy Mollet, bogged down in the Algerian war, gradually abandoned all the tenets of the left while retaining its rhetoric; Chaban Delmas's timid attempt to create a “new society” was stopped by President Georges Pompidou. It has never been made clear enough that, under the debonaire appearance of a teacher's son who has made good, Pompidou was a man of the right. And his advisers were a small group even further to the right—Jacques Chirac and the two gray eminences, Pierre Juillet and Marie France Garaud.

In Mitterrand's view, a government of the left is therefore bound to “drift to the right” if it separates itself from the Communists. But, as Sartre

used to say, if one can't govern with the Communists, neither can one govern without them. At that time the Socialist party, eroded by its internal rifts and compromises, no longer was a group capable of winning, although it had remained quite firmly entrenched in the local city halls and general councils. Mitterrand's first job was rebuilding the party. Whatever one may think of him as a person, or of some aspects of his policy, all the people of the left should thank him for having done it. Given the situation, it was hard to believe he could. With a great deal of courage, stubbornness, and skill, Mitterrand made the SP into the political force it is today.

When in 1971, at the Epinay congress, Mitterrand got hold of the SP and led his friends into the party, when later Michel Rocard's friends also joined, together with the Marxists of the old SFIO (Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière) fresh groups of socialists of all types came in. Many of them were ardent Catholic activists but none of them Marxists; no more than Mitterrand, for that matter. It's probably the SP's new pragmatic socialism that enabled it to put a stop to its continuing ideological squabbling with the CP. The squabbling had been a source of great satisfaction to the CP, which felt that if the two parties remained at odds it had nothing to fear. By using a pragmatic approach and not worrying about the doctrinal issue, Mitterrand and his friends worked out their strategy for uniting the left. It had initially taken shape when Mitterrand ran against de Gaulle as the left's sole candidate, and a second time and in the same manner in 1974.

Uniting the left hinged, of course, on the formation of a strong Socialist party. Once this was achieved, additional factors also tended to support the policy. The chief factor is what I just mentioned about the center-left's inability to govern; there also are two others. In 1970 and the following years, the CP represented about 6 million voters. Was the SP going to go on as if they didn't exist? These 6 million Communist voters were very convenient for the right. Since the Communists were on bad terms with the Socialists they were not dangerous, and the right believed till

the last moment that it could continue using them as a bugaboo. The Socialists were smart enough to realize that among the people of the left a strong drive for unity was rising. This is why Mitterrand won. When he proposed a union of the left in 1971, and in 1972 succeeded in getting the Communists to sign the common program, he appeared to stand for unity and the Socialist party along with him. When the Communists broke away in 1977 it was so obviously of their own doing that the voters held it against them rather than against the SP. As Maurice Duverger recently wrote in *Le Monde*, the Socialists won when the left united, and made additional gains when it broke up.

THESE ARE SOME of the reasons why the Socialists won, and we can pause now to give some thought to those who are leaving power. They are still in a state of shock; they can't get over it. In the 23 years they held power, the men of the right had come to regard themselves as the legitimate rulers. To them, the victory of the left was not a defeat so much as an usurpation. And what a defeat! Giscard d'Estaing wasn't beaten, he was chased out (and in part by his former friends). His departure has been compared to that of Charles X when, as Chateaubriand wrote, the people went to the windows to see the monarchy ride away.

But what brought this about? It seems to me that one of Giscard d'Estaing's worst mistakes was choosing an economist for Premier—"the best French economist," he said at the time. The Premier has to be a politician. He must be the one who must try, for political reasons, to have the sacrifices requested by his Minister of the Economy and accepted by the public. By eliminating this buffer, by placing the public in direct contact with this professor, a total stranger to the daily life of the nation's men and women, who made decisions about their lives in the name of principles he explained to them with the undisguised contempt of the expert for the layman, Giscard d'Estaing probably made one of the gravest blunders of his career. But it was an understandable one, since he had never grasped the significance of contact between the citizenry and power. "His problem," de Gaulle said, "is the people."

Giscard did his very best at the beginning. The result was the series of wrong gestures and the many ridiculous initiatives people remember—breakfast invitations to the neighborhood sanitation men, or meals taken in the homes of deserving families. . . . The French people saw through it: this was the type of relationship the lord of the manor maintained with his tenant farmers, or the

aristocrat (real or fake) had with his retinue. The other mistakes of Giscard and his followers stem from the way they chose to govern. After a few reforms—important ones to be sure, but that didn't change anything in the structure of society or the economy—the right used power as was to be expected. The government was a manager—manager of the nation, crisis manager. The running of the treasury and the finances topped all other concerns. "The franc is strong," we were told daily. This reminded me of my trips to Portugal in Salazar's times, when the escudo was one of the strongest currencies in Europe and one of the most valued, while the country was dying of hunger. Since the way the country was managed was not to be questioned, all the difficulties were ascribed to developments abroad—the petroleum upheavals, the German or the American recession, and so on. And since the difficulties came from abroad, it would have been useless and even disastrous to make any change whatsoever in the domestic policy, which was based on the soundest economic principles. The nation was under the impression that its government regarded the steady rise in unemployment as an unpleasant phenomenon, but one over which it had no more control than over the weather.

It is odd that these economists, these managers, did not realize that in today's world, management has to be based on a project, a "model," as the new science of management calls it. Day-to-day management surely has its points, but it's not enough. The French right, however, was so utterly incapable of coming up with a "project," a "model for society," that its government discarded planning altogether. ("To plan is our strongest imperative," de Gaulle used to say.) This lack of a project—or shall we say, of a general idea of the society's future—resulted in a series of contradictions that the government was not even aware of. And while these men in power proclaimed their partisanship for a society dedicated to "freedom and responsibility," few of their cabinets did more, through demagoguery and in order to flatter what they thought was the predominant public opinion, than to curtail that freedom and responsibility.

This lack of a project suddenly pointed up the intellectual paucity of the right, in contrast to the projects of the left. The only effective political way of opposing a project is to present a counterproject. Without any project, what could the right do? It could scare people, or so it believed. The entire presidential campaign focused on scare mongering. "Beware," we were told, "our opponents are trying to drag you into a collectivist society that

will destroy your freedoms,” and so forth. After Mitterrand was elected, the campaign for the legislative elections started. One would have thought that the right had understood why it had failed and would have changed its methods. Not at all. Before the first round, and even between the first and second rounds, when defeat seemed increasingly certain and clear-cut, the men of the right went on countering the social democratic project with the same arguments and scare campaigns.

I HAVE USED the term “social democratic” and would like to conclude with this comment on it. The program put forth by Mitterrand is less socialist than were some Labour programs in England. It does not provide for free medical care or the same scope of nationalizations; it is not as radical. It probably could have been signed by Brandt, and certainly by Kreisky. It is a program of very gradual reforms that takes into account the national and troubled international picture, and the need to maintain the fundamental balances.

Let us also note that it’s this essentially social democratic program that the Communists have accepted in order to enter the government—enter “through the back door,” as the Rome *Repubblica* put it; enter “on their knees,” as the Paris *Canard Enchaîné* wrote. One should not forget that for the CP signing the government program meant a 180° turn on every point. On Afghanistan, Poland, the Camp David accords, the SS-20s, but also on the timing and scope of the nationalizations, the international crisis, and decentralization. The CP

was faced with a hard choice. Its percentage of voters was down to 16 and was doomed to fall even further if it pursued the same antisocialist policy that had prompted it to wish for the victory of the right, as Mr. Brezhnev had. But signing such a contract was something else again. “That’s a perfect text you’re proposing to us,” Marchais is reported to have told Jospin during the negotiations. “The only thing that’s missing is the SP enrollment blank for us to fill out.” It also was the CP’s acknowledgment that it had become a fringe party, was giving up any Communist “project” and so, to put it succinctly, the CP was committing itself to a social democratic policy, although a few weeks earlier the term was still used as an insult.

There is no doubt that this is a tactical position. The CP has certainly not renounced its “project” forever in order to switch to social democratic ways. François Mitterrand has no illusions on this score. When this was pointed out to him at the time of the common program negotiations, he answered that what the CP “thought,” as opposed to what it “did,” was not his concern. It was quite a chance he was taking and up to now he has done all right. Whatever the CP does now, and even if it makes some gains among the voters, which is not inconceivable, the Constitution of the Fifth Republic that Mitterrand so actively fought is giving the Socialist President a seven-year term to win or to lose, and five years to the just-elected Chamber. Unlike the governments of the Fourth Republic, which were at the mercy of a ministerial crisis, the current government has time on its side.

Translated by HELEN KATEL □

Lewis Coser

Afterthoughts on the Israeli Election

Shortly before the elections, Israeli television interviewed a few men and women in the street as to their views of the candidates. Said one of them, “I don’t know why the difference between them matters—after all they are both Jews.” This was, however, decidedly a minority view. In fact, the elections were fought with a ferocity seldom seen in Israeli politics. What is more, the results revealed a sharp polarization of political alle-

giances that may have serious consequences for the future of Israel.

This polarization was clearly shown by two related phenomena: the decline in the votes of minor parties, and the overlap of ethnic belongingness and political affiliation.

In previous elections a large part of the electorate, especially on the left, seems to have felt that since it was virtually certain Labor would win,

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they might as well indulge in the luxury of voting for a candidate of their choice somewhat to the left of Labor. A similar phenomenon could be observed on the right as well. This time, however, everybody seems to have felt that the choice between Begin's Likud and Peres's Labor Alignment was so crucial that the luxury of voting for smaller parties was no longer possible. As a result, many of these parties have now disappeared from the Knesset or hold only one or two seats. Even Moshe Dayan's list ended up with only two. The near-disappearance of small parties might be viewed as a remedy for the excessive fragmentation of Israeli politics. But the other evidence of polarization—the overlap between ethnic and political allegiance—seems to me a disaster. The bulk of the “Oriental Jews,” the Sephardim from Asia and Africa, voted for the Likud, and the bulk of Jews of European origin, the Ashkenazim, voted for the Labor Alignment. The danger is that Israel, to use Disraeli's phrase about Victorian England, will become two nations.

The Likud, to be sure, encompasses other elements beside the Oriental Jews. There are the die-hard ultranationalist Begin-Herut supporters of old. There are the remnants of the middle- and upper-middle-class voters who used to vote for the General Zionists as well as the members of the liberal small-merchant and big-business community who stand for Free Enterprise above all. There are Sabras who see Begin as the great patriot and who have no pious feelings for the founding fathers of Labor who created the State of Israel. But all these are relatively insignificant in comparison with the masses of Sephardic Jews who think that they have found a home in the Likud.

WHEN THE ORIENTAL IMMIGRANTS arrived in large numbers in the 1950s, they were often treated with condescension and even a measure of contempt by the dominant Ashkenazi Jews, who controlled the state, and by the bureaucracies of the Histadrut (labor union federation). They were often dumped into new development towns and villages and treated, so they felt, with sneers, discrimination, and studied neglect. The older generation of Oriental Jews tended to accept their lot, especially since their economic situation did slowly improve over the years. But the next generation, which now has come of age politically, harbors a fierce resentment against the Labor establishment. To be sure, their absolute deprivation has diminished over the years, but their relative deprivation, in

comparison with the condition of the Ashkenazim, has become more acute. The development towns and villages that Labor created for the new Oriental immigrants have now become hotbeds of discontent against all that Labor stands for. Labor has struck no roots in these communities and is generally perceived as “the enemy.” The Sephardic Jews did not so much vote for Begin as against Peres.

There may, surely, be some irrational elements in the massive turn toward the Likud on the part of the Oriental Jews; but Labor in fact has fostered, wittingly or unwittingly, a spirit of contempt for the Oriental Jews among Ashkenazim. At the last big election rally of the Labor Alignment in Tel Aviv, Peres, the main speaker, was preceded by a popular comedian, Topaz, who treated the rally to a variety of ethnic slurs on the Sephardim and, most perturbingly, the audience loved it and applauded enthusiastically.

BEGIN HAS BEEN MOST SKILLFUL in exploiting the resentments of the Oriental Jews. He has cultivated a demagogic populist style, and he has not discouraged his image as “king of Israel.” He has consciously exploited the imagery of the Big Man, dispenser of favors and patronage, the paternalistic defender of his (Sephardic) people against the bureaucrats and technocrats of the Labor establishment. And Begin stands in the eyes of the Oriental Jews for firm treatment of the Arabs, whom they hate. The Sephardim may not be foremost among the settlers in the occupied territories, but they are strong backers of annexation.

Labor succeeded in keeping the allegiance of the kibbutzim and other collective settlements. And Labor has regained votes it had lost to the now defunct Democratic Movement for Change four years ago, but it made no significant inroads elsewhere in the Jewish population. The image Peres presented was that of a competent, rational, technocratic administrator. The ideological fervor so pronounced among his Labor predecessors was absent from his appeals as it was also, by and large, from the appeal of other members of the Labor establishment. To speak the language of Max Weber, the charisma of the first generation of Labor's leaders has been thoroughly routinized in the second. We now face the paradox that only a rekindling of the idealistic spirit of Labor's earlier appeal will allow it a realistic chance to oppose the populist fervor of the Likud.

There was only one hopeful sign in this dreary picture. A significant portion of the Arabs, who in

recent years tended to vote for the Communist party, this time voted for Labor. The Arabs never had a particular liking for Marxism or Leninism in the past, they could not care less. But voting for the CP was, in their eyes, a protest against being treated as second-class citizens. (They also were grateful for the opportunities that the Eastern bloc provided for the higher education of their sons and daughters in government fellowships. A high proportion of Arab intellectuals are products of Eastern-bloc universities.) This time, however, partly because of the aggressive anti-Arab policies of the Likud, they turned to Labor in significant numbers and were probably responsible for some of Labor's gains. This permits some hope for their integration in the Israeli political system.

AS THINGS STAND, Begin has been able to patch together a slim majority in the next Knesset with the help of the three splintered religious parties. It is unlikely that his government will last more than a year or two. New elections will then be held. If Labor is to have a chance next time, it must

change in fundamental ways. It must shed the establishment characteristics that are still so predominant; it must project the image of innovation and commitment to a fraternal and egalitarian society; it must show the Sephardim, who will be a majority of the voters at the next election, that it is willing to share power with their representatives; it must show the Arabs that it is a truly national party concerned with the fate of Arabs and Jews alike. If Labor does not manage so to recast itself, it will gradually become the party of aging bureaucrats and kibbutzniks unable to stem the tide of jingoism, xenophobia, populist demagogery, and nationalistic zeal.

Economic and foreign policy matters will undoubtedly take the forefront of the Israeli stage in the months to come. I have not commented on these since they have been adequately covered in American reports. But I am convinced that the background factors sketched here are of considerably greater significance than immediate economic or foreign policy issues. They might, in fact, decide the long-term viability of Israeli society. □



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Dennis H. Wrong

How Critical Is Our Condition?

A Look at the Left and Liberals in America

I do not recall a time when the prospects for the left in America have looked quite so dim. By "the left," I mean both the relatively small group of intellectuals and perpetual activists who have been responsive to Marxian or at least socialist ideas and the liberals who have led the Democratic party's "New Deal coalition" that has been a major force in American politics since the 1930s. Three times before in the past 30 years Republicans have won landslide presidential elections; so why, we might ask, should Reagan's victory by a margin less impressive than that of Eisenhower twice and Nixon once be taken as evidence of an unprecedentedly grave "crisis" of the left and/or liberalism?

There are certainly a great many similarities of mood, rhetoric, and expectation between 1952 and 1980. One is reminded also of 1972, although to a lesser extent, since McGovern was perceived as an atypical Democratic candidate and Nixon's overwhelming victory had little or no effect on the congressional elections. But it now looks as if the Watergate scandal may have only temporarily blocked a Republican upsurge animated to a considerable extent by a reaction or "backlash" against changes ascribed to liberalism that took place in the 1960s. Denial of the reality of a "conservative tide" by liberal and left publicists amounts to whistling in the dark.

I agree that there is no conservative tide if what is meant by this contention is that the 51 percent of the electorate that voted for Reagan were not voting for dismantling the welfare state, repealing civil rights legislation, or in favor of the goal of the Moral Majority to abolish reforms affecting women, sex, and

family life enacted in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet liberalism, even the most moderate kind, has become sufficiently unpopular to have lost the political initiative it began to reacquire in 1960 and maintained, though more haltingly in the face of increasing opposition, through the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations. But this, too, happened before, in the 1950s. Are there reasons for holding that the prospects of the left are even worse today than in those distant days that were, after all, succeeded by new protest movements and far-reaching reforms?

I shall try to answer this question by examining the present situation in relation to a conception of the "rhythm of democratic politics" that I presented in *Dissent* in the Winter 1974 issue. This conception may provide some guidance, although I am now prepared to entertain serious reservations about it that are, in fact, the grounds for my pessimism about the future of left-liberalism. Yet no less a spokesman for liberalism than Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has drawn on a famous essay of his father's, which also was one of my sources in arriving at the idea of a "rhythm" in democratic politics, to present a more optimistic reading than seems to be justified.¹ Schlesinger, Jr.'s statement appeared before the Reagan victory, but, more realistically than others on the left, he at least acknowledged the existence even then of an ascending conservative mood.

The rhythm of democratic politics involves the alternation of periods dominated by protest and policy initiatives from the left with periods of conservative retrenchment. Since

¹ "Is Liberalism Dead?" *New York Times Magazine*, March 30, 1980, pp. 42-43, 70-73, 79.

the conservative eras do not result in abolition of the reforms achieved by the left-liberal administrations, there is, over time, a "leftward drift" inherent in democratic politics. The drift is leftward not because a permanent majority is won over to the support of the more liberal party, but because the achievements in office of that party (or coalition of parties) become part of the status quo preserved by the conservatives once they return to office, as inevitably they do.

The most extensive periodization of American political history into cycles of alternating liberal and conservative ascendancy is that of Schlesinger, Sr. in his 1939 article updated several times both by himself and his son. His cyclical—really, spiral—conception may have encouraged both Roosevelt in 1940 and Kennedy in 1960 to become presidential candidates, which would make his idea partially self-fulfilling, something that seems to happen sooner or later to most widely disseminated theories of the political process. Schlesinger presented a broad generalized description of American political history from the decade preceding the American Revolution to the present rather than a true "theory," for he made only ad hoc efforts at causal explanation of the pattern he identified. Nor has his son done any better. I shall return to this inadequacy later, but let us first look at the present situation in light of the cyclical pattern itself.

Those who question that the voters gave Reagan a "mandate" to abandon the social policies introduced in the 1960s, as opposed to merely refraining from extending them, appear to accept the rhythm model at least as it applies to the electorate. But an election may *initiate* a decisive shift in the public mood rather than simply reflect an earlier change of mood. Its effects may be more consequential than its causes; for chance, luck, and a host of transitory and ephemeral events usually contribute to the outcome of an election. Kennedy's narrow presidential victory in 1960, for example, began a turn to the left, although Eisenhower could probably easily have been reelected had it been legally possible for him to run again.

To doubt that the voters wanted Reagan to do all sorts of reactionary things amounts therefore to little more than a debating point. Roosevelt was elected in 1932 by almost exactly the same percentage of a relatively, as well as absolutely, smaller electorate. And as Reagan himself reminded us—apparently without irony—in his acceptance speech at the Republican convention, FDR promised to reduce federal spending and intervention in the economy. If Reagan chooses to follow the most extreme policies of the right wing of the Republican party, he can claim that the voters authorized him to do so with rather more justice than FDR could with respect to the first 100 days of the New Deal, if only because Reagan himself had long been the preferred candidate of the right wing.

In striking contrast to Eisenhower, Reagan has chosen to present his Administration as aiming at a thoroughgoing transformation of the role of government in American life. His cultivated identification with FDR is meant to underline his determination to change course, as is the priority he has given to his economic program over both foreign policy and the "social conservatism" upheld by important voting groups behind him. The drastic cuts in welfare spending and taxes proposed in the new Administration's first months in office unmistakably distinguish it from the pacifying conservatism favored by Eisenhower and then again by Nixon in 1968 with its assurances of continuity with the recent past.

Yet the essence of the Reagan program may well turn out to be little more than the fanfare with which it has been presented, for significant parts of it will be trimmed in Congress. This is especially true of the tax cuts, so dear to the supply-side theorists but feared to be inflationary by the more conventional economists and corporate managers within the Reagan administration. The experience of the Thatcher government in Britain, which was also determined to adopt policies at variance with the shrewd, essentially managerial conservatism of previous postwar Tory governments, is likely to have a cautionary effect on Washington. Reagan may end up looking

like a much more conventional post-New Deal Republican president in what he actually achieves. For that matter, we are told that not only FDR but Calvin Coolidge, of all people, is one of the past presidents he most admires! The line about “getting the government off our backs” has conformed, after all, to standard Republican rhetoric for a long time. Does anyone recall Eisenhower in 1952 holding up an egg and indignantly enumerating the taxes on it, managing to suggest that even the chickens were fiscally oppressed by the welfare state? Yet Eisenhower turned out to be the very model of a modern conservative president fully in tune with the “rhythm of democratic politics.”

The inflation crisis and the belief that it was partly caused by government spending were genuine new concerns in 1980. Anxiety over the alleged spending-inflation link amounted to considerably more than mere nostalgia or utopian hankering for a nonexistent *laissez-faire* past to which many on the left attributed it. If there was one Reagan slogan that moved many voters, it was his suggestion that they compare their present economic situation with that of four years ago. I share the general belief on the left that the Reagan economic program is unlikely to reduce inflation, and unlikely to markedly increase investment or productivity, or even in the end greatly to reduce nonmilitary government spending. It may even aggravate the situation it is intended to remedy, leading to abandonment and reversal within a fairly short time.

But what of the Moral Majority and New Right, crusading against abortion, pornography, homosexuality, and women’s rights—“social” rather than economic conservatism? Though the issues are quite different, there is a real similarity or at least a “functional equivalence,” between these groups and the “politics of revenge” in the early 1950s against the New Deal and the Second World War of which McCarthyism was the most notable manifestation. One ominous difference is that Eisenhower, whatever his expedient timidities, was not even a closet McCarthyite and became the Republican candidate by defeat-

ing the right wing of his party to which McCarthy and his supporters belonged. Much of the passion behind the Reagan candidacy, on the other hand, came from the Moral Majority and the New Right. While any group calling itself a majority is invariably far from constituting one, this group cannot be too readily dismissed as a force in the Reagan administration.

When the Moral Majority organized triumphal rallies in several New Jersey cities a few days after the election, I happened to see a television newsclip in which a reporter asked a middle-aged woman why she supported the movement. She was gray-haired and gaunt-faced, looking rather like someone out of a photograph in one of those books of the 1930s documenting the plight of the Southern share-croppers, such as *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* or *You Have Seen Their Faces* (readers with gray hair will remember that time). She answered that she wanted the country to become again what it had been when she was a girl growing up, when “there was respect for the flag and homosexuality stayed in the closet.” Perhaps this was the face of a “fascist beast,” but it seemed more pathetic than menacing.

Yet the Moral Majority, the New Right, and the issues they are concerned about represent a much more real “fascist potential” than McCarthyism ever did. The making of a major political cause out of veneration for the flag and declared opposition to public homosexuality—the conversion of these and similar sentiments into the canons of an impassioned mobilizing ideology—are the raw material for a crypto-fascist movement. There is a good deal of evidence that in many parts of the country the Democratic party is now perceived as the party of abortion, sexual license, opposition to the family, coerced racial integration by busing and quotas, tolerance of crime, and indifference to religion, rather than the party sympathetic to welfare measures and the needs of the economically hard-pressed. People who are still inclined to support it on economic grounds are pulled in the opposite direction by moral and “lifestyle” considerations.

A popular movement rallying people behind "traditional" values against forces identified with modernity and cosmopolitanism is at least the seedbed of fascism. The McCarthyism of the 1950s had no such deep roots: it had its origins in the bitter partisanship of Republicans who had lost five straight presidential elections and in the worst tensions of the Cold War. The confrontational phase of the Cold War kept McCarthyism alive for an indecently long time, but it became a spent political force not long after Stalin's death and the end of the war in Korea. The "deep" sociological explanations of McCarthyism, such as the "status politics" theory advanced by Hofstadter, Bell, and Lipset, began within a few years to look like intellectuals' typical overinterpretations of transitory events. The concerns of the Moral Majority supporters, however, are rooted in personal experiences touching the most intimate domestic aspects of daily life.

It amazes me that so many liberals and leftists seem surprised by the emergence of something like the Moral Majority.² Anyone whose memory extends back a mere 15 years can testify to the reality of sweeping changes in the laws governing divorce, abortion, capital punishment, and the censorship of obscenity and pornography; intolerance of premarital and extramarital sex, homosexuality, and drug use; and, whatever the fate of ERA, in the status of women and relations between the sexes. The upheaval within the Catholic church during Pope John's pontificate also deserves to be mentioned. As recently as 1965, traditional norms and 18th-century legal statutes were taken for granted even by most liberals and radicals as immovable social furniture; so were the conservative if not reactionary positions adopted by the Church on most political and social issues. Though shrugged off or mocked as archaic relics by all who considered themselves enlightened, there was no visible political de-

mand nor even hope for the speedy reform of these conditions.

Yet within a few years all these ancient bulwarks had crumbled: nonadversary divorce, abortion, and even "hard-core" pornography became legal nearly everywhere; homosexuality was legalized in some jurisdictions and accepted *de facto* in others; sexual relations among adolescents and living together without marriage by older men and women become commonplace; parietal rules were abolished at most residential colleges and coeducational dormitories were widely established; capital punishment was virtually discontinued. All of these changes came about very suddenly, often as the result of decisions by the courts or even by bar association committees. Did anyone really think that the abandonment of so many traditionally sanctified customs and attitudes could be accomplished *without* evoking strong resentments in some segments of the population? The wonder is that it took so long for something like the Moral Majority to appear.

Still, that woman in Newark struck me as pathetic because her hopes for restoring the America she knew as a child are so unlikely to materialize. No doubt, "respect for the flag" can and will return—if, indeed, it ever really departed. But homosexuality is not going to be forced back into the closet nor women into the kitchen. The availability of abortions will be reduced—it already has been for the poor—but there is unlikely to be a return to the condition in which abortion was illegal throughout the United States that prevailed before the mid-1960s. The main achievements of the "sexual revolution," however unliberating some of them may now appear to be, are not going to be reversed at the level of actual conduct. There will, of course, be some legal trimming and perhaps a few successful campaigns in small towns and a few less metropolitan states to undo recent trends to "permissiveness." ERA will probably not pass but neither will constitutional amendments banning abortion or permitting school prayers. If my assurances lack sufficient authority, I can cite two well-known pundits of quite different political persuasions to the

² An exception is Fred Siegel, who makes some exceedingly perceptive observations on both the mentality of the New Right and on the incomprehension of it exhibited by many liberals in "Notes on the New Right," *Commonweal*, May 8, 1981, pp. 269-72.

same effect. Garry Wills some weeks before the election reported in his syndicated column that he had tried to convince a group of worried foreign journalists that the extreme conservatism they thought they were observing was "vastly exaggerated" and actually represented a coming to terms with "the drastic social revolution we all went through in the 1960's."³ James Q. Wilson, the Harvard neo-conservative, after expressing considerable sympathy for the religious and moral concerns of the New Right, nevertheless concluded that American history indicated that

in every preceding period of religious revival and broad cultural change, the forces of tradition have ultimately lost . . . [and] every such period . . . has sooner or later been dominated by young, educated activists who have left as their legacy the values implicit in liberal higher education.⁴

Even in conventional political terms, talk of 1980 as a "critical" or "realigning" election is wildly premature. These terms were introduced in the 1950s to explain, or explain away, Eisenhower's two victories, which were defined as "deviating" rather than "realigning" elections because they did not fundamentally alter the partisan alignments that had made the Democrats the majority party since 1932. On examination, it turns out that there have been only two realigning elections in American history (since at least the Civil War): in 1896 and 1932. If we consider only the eight presidential elections (leaving out 1980) since the Second World War, three were "deviating" (1952, 1956, 1972), three were presumably "normal" or "maintaining" (1948, 1964, 1976), and two were too close to classify (1960, 1968). If fewer than half of the last eight elections can be regarded as "normal," the labels just don't seem very useful.

There is no inherent reason why there should not be an indefinite succession of fluctuating or ambiguous elections, a protracted period of stalemate between the parties. If the Republicans make significant gains in the

1982 congressional elections, talk of realignment will undoubtedly become louder as Roosevelt's off-year gains in 1934 are recalled. But Reagan's age limits him to one term in office and it is doubtful that he can transfer his popularity to a successor. So it is by no means impossible that the Democrats might recapture the presidency in 1984. On the other hand, the Republicans may benefit from just plain luck with the economy, the energy crisis, and in foreign affairs. Even if there is little improvement in the economy, it is worth remembering that the New Deal never fully put an end to the Depression and Roosevelt was nevertheless twice reelected before the defense boom brought a decisive economic upturn.

However, the alternation of parties in office is not the essence of the left/right rhythm of democratic politics. Campaigning by television, the decline of local patronage, the rise of single-issue groups, and the unanticipated effects of new election laws have resulted in the much-discussed "decomposition" of political parties, reducing the significance of the candidates' party affiliation. Even if the Democratic party were to return to power in 1984, it does not follow that it would necessarily win under the leadership of liberals responsive to the concerns of the smaller community of left-wing intellectuals and activists. As an individual, Jimmy Carter was undoubtedly something of a political sport, a minor regional politician able to win a surprise nomination by taking advantage of new primary rules in 1976. But the ambiguity of his ideological coloration could very well become the norm for future Democratic candidates. I remember noticing early in the 1976 primaries that the most conventional liberal candidate in the field, Morris Udall, seemed to be carrying all the college and university towns while trailing his opponents everywhere else. Like John Anderson in 1980, he was what Henry Fairlie called the "candidate of the quiche eaters."

The prospects of the left therefore are a separate matter from the successes or failures of the Reagan administration. The latter may turn out to be conventionally rather than

³ *New York Daily News*, October 15, 1980.

⁴ "Reagan and the Republican Revival," *Commentary*, October 1980, p. 31.

radically conservative, dampening the hopes of its doctrinaire monetarist and supply-side supporters and the *revanchistes* of the New Right, as well as the fears of alarmists and pessimists on the left. But this will in no way ensure that Reagan will be followed by a return to power of a restored left-liberal coalition representing yet another turn of the left-right cycle consistent with the pattern of the past.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. attributes the present conservative trend to the need for an interlude of "recuperation" similar to those that followed other reform eras in which "the changes wrought in the previous activist period are digested by the social organism and penetrate the framework of society." He thinks that "sometime in the 1980's . . . there will be a breakthrough into a new political epoch, a new conviction of social possibility" centered on the "detonating issues" of inflation and energy. "The cyclical rhythm is a physiological process," he contends, "like the systole and diastole of the heart." This is surely belaboring the biological analogy to the point where metaphor does the work of explanation. In 1980, furthermore, inflation and energy were issues working against liberals, largely because they were perceived as "system problems" affecting everyone—as opposed to unemployment and welfare spending, the standard Democratic issues increasingly stressed during the campaign, which are far more selective in their impact on the electorate.

Schlesinger's expectation that inflation and energy will eventually favor liberals rests entirely on the assumption that conservatives will be unable to solve these problems by following their traditional preferences and reducing government intervention in the economy while reposing their faith in the market. This is doubtless a correct assumption, but activist government is not in itself liberal and many analysts have noted the possibility of a conservative "corporatist" alliance between government and big business aiming at the stabilization of prices and the planned allocation of energy resources. Even if Reagan's early aggressive efforts to improve the

economy fail, he may earn (as FDR did) credit with the voters for having at least tried, or given the appearance of trying. Moreover, he has left himself plenty of time to change course, even to the extent of confirming Robert Lekachman's prediction that within two years he will introduce mandatory wage and price controls. The belief among liberals that the failure of his economic policies will immediately result in a swing back to the Democrats is entirely too comfortable an assumption.

A more fundamental reason for questioning Schlesinger's confidence in a liberal revival in less than a decade is his conviction that the cyclical pattern identified by his father makes such a swing to the left inevitable. Since it is not clear what causes the pattern, why should we expect it to persist? My own version of the rhythm of democratic politics suggested that the pattern reflected the cumulative effects over time of political equality in the form of universal suffrage on the social and economic inequalities that continue to prevail in democratic capitalist societies.⁵ Parties of the left propose egalitarian reforms in order to mobilize the potential majority of those in the population who are relatively socially and economically disadvantaged. Parties of the right compete by stressing issues that are not class-linked, such as nationalism, moral values, and ethnic or religious rivalries, striving thereby to offset the larger class constituency susceptible to appeals of the left. Groups on the right have far greater control over all politically relevant resources except the right to vote itself, and this enables them to mobilize more fully their constituency and to conduct more intensive election campaigns. By contrast, parties of the left suffer from a "mobilization lag" because their potential majority consists of poorly informed, traditionally subservient people, more parochial in their attachments and with less free time to devote to politics. But sooner or later, often as the result of an economic or foreign policy crisis affecting the

⁵ My fullest and most recent statement of the "theory" is in chap. 8 of *Wrong, Power: Its Forms, Bases and Uses* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

whole society, a party of the left wins an election and enacts at least its minimum program. But eventually the party of the right returns to office, accepting the permanence of the reforms the left has instituted. The recurrence of this sequence of events constitutes the rhythm of democratic politics and exhibits the leftward drift inherent in it.

This formulation amounts at best to what philosophers would call an “explanation sketch” of the cyclical pattern rather than a full causal account. I submit, however, that it is a good deal more illuminating than the invocation of physical or biological metaphors about tidal flows or the rhythm of heartbeats. It also recognizes that conservatives have genuine popular issues favoring them in patriotic and moral or religious sentiments rather than merely capitalizing on a periodic need for tranquillity after bouts of reforming zeal directed by the left. My sketch does not, to be sure, account for the outcome of any single election, since it gives primary attention to the constants underlying the appeals of parties of the right and left and the different class constituencies responsive to them. The moral and religious issues promoted by the New Right and the resurgence of patriotic feeling resulting from the protracted Iranian hostage crisis, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the evidence of increased Soviet military strength certainly contributed to the 1980 Republican victory. But Reagan also profited from the state of the economy, usually the issue working to the advantage of the Democrats. Conversely, foreign policy has often favored the Democrats since 1940. Particular election outcomes, especially when there is a change of party, are always influenced by conditions affecting the whole society as well as by the variable mobilization of the major constituencies regularly supporting the left or the right.

The assumption that conservative eras will give way to new periods of innovation from the left presupposes the existence of a continuing reservoir of potentially discontented voting groups ready to support new egalitarian reforms once the attraction of issues favoring

conservatives diminishes. But what if this reservoir shrinks in size at the end of each period of reform? What if there is a progressive increase in the number of people who are *relatively satisfied* with the positions they have achieved in the prevailing distribution of power, privilege, and prestige, and are therefore less responsive to appeals for further egalitarian reforms, although considerable social inequality remains? In this case, one would have to conclude that the leftward drift of the rhythm of democratic politics is counterbalanced over time by a rightward tendency in which each era of left ascendancy reduces the social base remaining available for a future turn to the left. The rhythm would then slow down and even cease at a point far short of full social and economic equality—a disheartening conclusion both for those who cherish this as an ideal and even more for those reduced to permanent minority and lower-class status.

The decline since 1945 in class voting suggests that there has been a long-run trend to the right underlying the two (really one-and-a-half) cyclical shifts between left and right over the same period. Efforts by some analysts to explain away this trend by excluding the results of supposedly “exceptional” elections (as in 1952 and 1972) are just another version of the “maintaining/deviating” typology I have here criticized. True, public-opinion surveys reveal little change over the last 40 years in the left/right or liberal/conservative class alignments on economic and welfare issues. As the 1980 Michigan Survey Center preelection polls revealed, there was a marked decline to the point of virtual disappearance in the correlation between class and attitudes regarding welfare spending and government intervention in the economy in general. But it is too early to read long-range significance into these findings, which may reflect temporary high anxiety over inflation. The same polls indicated much greater working-class conservatism on “social” issues. Nevertheless, both elections and surveys over the past two decades show that working- and lower-middle-class citizens remain predominantly left of center on economic issues, and the

center itself has, of course, shifted to the left. Yet the decline in class voting can be interpreted to mean that left/right issues have become less decisive in influencing the vote. They are subordinated more readily than in the past to other issues on which conservatives and Republicans fare better. A change reducing the *salience* of left/right issues, even if class alignments with respect to them remain much the same, can be seen as a movement of the electorate to the right.

The national Democratic party since at least 1936 has strongly identified itself with the interests and concerns of the more deprived segments of the population: manual workers, the poor, racial minorities, women, the unemployed. Senator Kennedy's eloquent speech at the 1980 Democratic convention reaffirmed this heritage. But there was a widespread sense at the time, expressed even by wholly sympathetic listeners, that the speech amounted to a "Last Hurrah," not only for Kennedy's 1980 presidential candidacy or for the Democrats' chances in the election, but also for the majorities won in the past by appealing primarily to a constituency of social and economic underdogs. The election outcome strengthened doubts that the poor, the victims of racial discrimination, and the unemployed are numerous enough, or that their plight is shocking enough to rally large numbers outside their ranks. This condition itself is the result of the welfare programs and civil rights legislation of the Kennedy-Johnson years and their influence throughout the society. As Michael Barone, a political consultant who worked for over a dozen 1980 Democratic senatorial candidates, wrote last November 22 in the *New Republic*:

If you listen to much Democratic oratory, you get the idea that we have a nation that is, in Franklin Roosevelt's phrase, one-third ill-clothed, ill-housed, and ill-fed. That description was accurate enough in 1936 and it was not too far off as recently as 1963 when Michael Harrington wrote *The Other America*. But it is not an accurate description of the United States today, and the voters know it. . . . It is particularly ironic that liberals persist in believing that poverty is widespread, because the

main reason it is not is that liberal programs have worked. . . . Democrats who act on the assumption that unemployment has the same kind of effect on people's lives as it did in the 1930s or the 1950s are going to come up with policies that make no sense to the voter. . . . [So] when liberals persist in seeing the United States in a perspective which is sharply critical, and which is not longer accurate, they risk being seen not as idealistic reformers but rather as anti-American cranks. . . . [Yet] the liberals, more than their adversaries, have shaped what America is today.

The failure of Barone's candidates—all but five of those he advised lost in November, including senators Church, Culver, and Nelson—perhaps leads him to exaggerate when he writes that "poverty largely has been conquered." As a political poller he is confined to reporting people's perceptions rather than economic realities, and one of Harrington's main contentions in his book was that poverty in America was relatively "invisible." Whatever real gains they may achieve, *all* major efforts at reform fall short of their goals, leaving a legacy of "unfinished revolutions." This is indeed a fundamental prerequisite for the persistence of the rhythm of democratic politics. The Democratic party neither can nor should abandon its representation of the interests of the poor, the blacks, women, and the unemployed.

But to acknowledge this is a different matter from assuming that the Democrats can expect to win future elections if they make the interests of the poor and the minorities their sole or even their primary cause. Should they do so, they will risk permanent minority status by becoming, in effect, a special-interest lobby failing to address itself to the system problems of inflation, energy, and economic growth, which are to an ever larger extent the main concerns of a majority of the population. It would be fatal to liberalism if it should come to pass that conservatives and Republicans seemed to monopolize even the most determined efforts to cope with these problems. Nor would it be wise to count on Reagan's economic policies pushing large numbers of people back below the poverty line or augmenting the ranks of the unemployed;

such an attitude encourages a version of “the worse, the better” thinking. Besides, the Reagan budget cuts are likely to be most harmful, as Felix Rohatyn and others have argued, to the Northeast and the Midwest, regions declining in population and political strength. Even if the effects of Reagan’s economic policies are uniformly negative, their impact on the Sunbelt and the West will be more cushioned than that on the old industrial and urban centers. This provides the Administration with a further political hedge against economic failure, for the South and the West are increasingly Republican bastions at the presidential level.

Finally, there is foreign policy. A major strategy of parties of the right has been to emphasize foreign policy in order to overcome the potential left majority inherent in the class division on which the left/right polarity is based. Since involvement in wars and international power politics has long been central to the experience of European nations, their conservative parties have been able to claim an identification with the national past itself, indeed with the very existence of the nation, long antedating the birth of democracy and the rise of the left. Until the present century, avoidance of “entangling alliances” and overseas involvements was the American tradition. Even so, five of the seven presidential candidates chosen primarily because they were military heroes were nominated by the more conservative political party. And the longest period of conservative dominance, in the decades following the Civil War, was sustained by the Republican tactic of “waving the bloody shirt.” Conversely, both in Europe and America the *raison d’être* of the left has been to call for domestic reforms promising greater equality and therefore to view with suspicion the elitism and relative insulation from popular control of armies, foreign offices, and secret intelligence.

American participation in both world wars occurred during reformist Democratic administrations. The revival of traditional isolationist sentiment in the interwar years ended when Roosevelt prolonged the left-liberal

momentum of the New Deal era by opposing fascism abroad and eventually leading the nation to victory in the Second World War. The replacement after the war of Germany and Japan as overseas antagonists by the Soviet Union and China, revolutionary states claiming to incarnate the essential vision of the left, weaned the right wing of the Republican party away from its isolationism. McCarthyism assailed the Democrats with the demagogic charge of “twenty years of treason,” but it also bridged the transition to a new Republican nationalism that accepted foreign alliances and a world role for the United States. By 1960, Richard Nixon was insisting in a private meeting at the Republican convention that “If you ever let them [the Democrats] campaign only on domestic issues, they’ll beat us—our only hope is to keep it on foreign policy.”⁶

The Vietnam War delegitimated American power throughout the world in the eyes of much of the American left, extending well into the ranks of the liberal Democrats. For the first time since the 1930s, a sizable segment of left-liberal opinion reverted to an essentially isolationist rejection of American involvement in world politics. McGovern represented this tendency in the 1972 presidential election. The ideologues of neoconservatism, moving toward full affiliation with the Republican party and the Reagan administration, have greatly exaggerated its influence in the Carter administration. Yet the growing strength and aggressiveness of the Soviet Union and its client states worked against Carter in the 1980 election even though he had already moved to increase defense spending, which after the invasion of Afghanistan was also strongly supported in a reversal of their previous position by the most “dovish” liberal Democratic senators.

The post-Vietnam mood of the smaller radical constituency, however, amounted to a near-total rejection of American power as inherently “imperialistic,” and to support for left nationalist regimes and movements in the

⁶ As quoted by Richard F. Hamilton, *Class and Politics in the United States* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1972), pp. 9-10.

"Third World," a term acquiring unmistakable eschatological overtones. This was not therefore a return to the older isolationism founded on belief in the superior morality and progressivism of America as compared to corrupt and wily foreigners mired in ancient quarrels. Nor was it even a revival of the "natural" priority accorded by the left to domestic reform in preference to foreign policy. The identification with the Soviet Union that had so damaged the left and the larger liberal community in the early years of the Cold War was repeated in the late 1960s and 70s, though more weakly and diffusely, with respect to Cuba, Maoist China, and North Vietnam. The results have been just as disastrous. American radicals nurtured by the New Left of the 1960s have since 1975 experienced an unprecedented series of traumatic shocks comparable to the earlier effects of revelations about Stalinism culminating in Khrushchev's secret speech of 1956: de-Maoization in China and the discovery that the country had virtually stood still economically for two decades; the genocide practiced by the Cambodian Communists; the brutal Vietnamese expulsion by water of their large Chinese minority; Chinese and Vietnamese military aggressions in Southeast Asia; the flight to the United States at the risk of drowning by fully one percent of the population of Cuba; the degeneration into unstable clerical fascism of the Iranian Revolution; the revolt of the Polish workers under the banners of free trade unionism, Catholicism, and nationalism rather than for a vision of "socialism with a human face." For the first time since 1917 there is no country anywhere in the world to which radicals can point with any credibility as a model for either advanced or underdeveloped societies to emulate. "Socialism" itself (as distinct from social democratic reformism) may have suffered mortal wounds as the name for an ideal alternative society.

The attempt of some on the American left to reactivate the anti-Vietnam protest movement is likely to prove even less successful than attempts to rebuild the old New Deal coalition on the domestic front. The demonstrations against the war in Southeast Asia

helped turn public opinion against it, but they also left a legacy of bitterness, especially among blue-collar workers, against the flamboyant anti-Americanism of the protesters and their open rejection of any world role for the United States. The overdone patriotic orgies welcoming home the Iranian hostages provided a release for pent-up emotions, manipulated, to be sure, by Carter in his reelection campaign and exploited by the media. Yet the Reagan administration clearly overestimated the depth and political meaning of such feelings when it initially made so much of El Salvador and echoed the most indiscriminate anti-Communist slogans of the early 1950s. The inflation of the "threat" to El Salvador aroused criticism well beyond the doctrinaire left, compelling a playing down of the situation and scarcely veiled efforts to curb the more extravagant talkers in the Administration, including the Secretary of State. The rejection of the Administration's plans for enormous and unselective increases in the military budget are other signs in the wind. Some lessons seem to have been learned from Vietnam and Iran.

Yet when the *Nation* distributes an advertisement emblazoned with the quotation "When did the cold war end?" Ronald Reagan, 1980," one must wonder why the journal's editors apparently see this as a self-evidently silly, deluded, or vicious query. Certainly, Reagan and many of his advisers cherish an obvious nostalgia for the vanished bipolar world of the late 1950s and the confrontational rhetoric associated with John Foster Dulles. However, the dangerous illusions such a view represents are not effectively overcome by denying the reality of increasing Soviet military power and by automatically denouncing any American efforts to contain it. If the left adheres to such a line, it will be isolated even from the liberal wing of the Democratic party. It will, in effect, be making a free gift to the right of the issue of resisting Soviet expansionism, an issue that enhances the appeal to nationalism that is the right's traditional trump card.

Liberals and social democrats need their own strategic experts, capable of recognizing

the Soviet threat and at the same time of criticizing unwise military and diplomatic responses to it—even if this should entail, as I believe it does, favoring the reinstatement of a peacetime draft as an alternative to the preference of the “military-industrial complex” for expensive hardware like the MX missile. Too many on the left continue to rely on the old anti-Cold War sloganizing about “U.S. imperialism,” “progressive Third World revolutions,” and the like—the mechanical negation, as Henry Pachter argued in one of his last, alas, contributions to *Dissent*, of the global anti-Communism that foundered in Vietnam.

Theories, cyclical metaphors, trend lines—none of them are infallible guides to the future: “History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors, / And issues. . . .” My reading of the immediate prospects for liberalism and the left is a pessimistic one, but I am constrained at the same time to recall the fate of those political diagnoses so widely advanced in the late 1950s that virtually wrote *finis* to the long historical journey of American society toward the fuller realization of its own liberal and egalitarian ideals. Both those who applauded it and those who deplored it believed in the reality of the “end of ideology,” although the institutions of racial segregation in the South still stood in violation of the Constitution. Within a year or two, the civil rights movement began its assault on segregation and released the reforming energies that were soon to flow into numerous other channels. Since practically nobody foresaw the movements that emerged within a very short time, it would be rash indeed to assert today with any degree of confidence that new impulses toward reform are unlikely to spring up in the foreseeable future.

Turns to the left in American politics have nearly always been sparked by the protests of groups that had long been ignored or had remained politically mute: abolitionists in the 1850s, poor farmers at the turn of the century, industrial workers in the 1930s, Southern blacks in the late 1950s, women a decade

later. If no group that might play such a role today is readily discernible, there remain plenty of “missed or compromised revolutions,” in Paul Goodman’s phrase, left over from the past. Goodman enumerated fully 27 in *Growing Up Absurd*, written in the late 1950s, without even mentioning race relations and feminism, which both loomed so large in the 1960s. Demographic trends are now increasing the numbers of old people in the population, which may very well make the reform of social security funding, national health insurance, and legal and moral questions pertaining to medical life-support systems into issues whose time has come in the 1980s.

The 1980 election marks the “end of the ’60s” in the same sense that, as Michael Harrington once remarked, 1948 was “the last year of the ’30s.” If the left tries to rally behind the old flags and slogans, it will find itself deservedly condemned to political oblivion. But there are signs that the Reagan administration is already beginning to discover that the break with the ’60s does not mean it is possible to refurbish as an effective counter-ideology the short-lived consensus that was challenged by the protest movements now in decline. It is also worth observing that political tendencies in the Western world are rarely confined by national boundaries or even by the Atlantic Ocean. The long overdue return to power of a center-left government in France as a result of Mitterrand’s election and the deepening unpopularity of the Thatcher government in Britain will not only influence American opinion in ways not easy to measure; they also cast a backward light in suggesting that Reagan’s election was far from reflecting a collective will to fracture the rhythm of democratic politics by giving free rein to a militant, even radical, conservatism.

Ultimately, perhaps the best reason for reserving judgment about the decline of liberalism may be simply the sheer weight of the liberal tradition in American history. It is hard to believe that it will not be renewed in a society that remains riddled with so many inequalities and imperfections. □

Leon Wieseltier

The Many Trials of Jacobo Timerman

Perhaps the best way to describe the great debate about American foreign policy in recent years is that it no longer has a place for Henry Kissinger. Nobody, except business, is interested in that kind of cunning. Idealism has been restored to foreign policy. The United States is called upon by all parties in the debate to pursue not only its interests but its principles; and the moral content of America's position in the world is the standard by which it shall be measured. This is no mean achievement, so soon after the isolationist temptation reared itself in the aftermath of the morally motivated adventure in Vietnam. Only a few now maintain (Senator Helms among them) that the United States has no responsibility to intrigue against the denial of freedom in other countries. Who speaks against human rights? Yet, as the present Administration will learn, a value is not a policy. America's commitment to freedom must be translated into a management of its many abuses; there are not, after all, many democracies in the world. And there the trouble begins.

"We'll be against the dictators you don't like the most if you'll be against the dictators we don't like the most." This was the bargain that Daniel P. Moynihan sought to strike at the Democratic platform committee in 1976. Human rights, to be sure; but there are the humans in Moscow and the humans in Buenos Aires. They all have their partisans. There are those, wary of what President Carter called "an inordinate fear of communism," who wish to accommodate the Soviet

Union, and those, wary of an inordinate fear of anticommunism, who wish to accommodate Argentina. The political interpretation of American idealism is not a pretty thing. Hearts are hardened on the right and on the left. There is good torture and bad torture; or, more precisely, since everybody prefers a world that is everywhere just, there is bad torture and worse torture. It is a contest between crusades. And the ugly, unspoken assumption of this contest is that the government of the United States must choose. That is what Jacobo Timerman has challenged. He argues that the choice is unacceptable. Timerman's political habits were formed in the 1930s, when he agitated against Franco *and* Hitler *and* Stalin. He has no favorite evil; therefore he is pilloried.

Timerman is an Argentinian journalist who was arrested, robbed, tortured, and exiled by the Argentinian military. He was, from 1971 until 1977, the editor of *La Opinion*, a more or less liberal newspaper that eventually consecrated itself to combat with equal fervor the killings on the left and the killings on the right. Timerman describes the dazed situation in Argentina in those years:

The Montoneros [guerrillas] assassinate those engaged in their suppression; those who they believe are so engaged; those whom they regard as doing nothing to oppose those who suppress them; those who speak up against the violence of both the Right and the Left because of their belief that members of the violent Left are accomplices of the Right; second-rank politicians who are friends of first-rank politicians

who refuse to make deals with the Montoneros; politicians who they imagine might at some point interfere with their future plans because these politicians are liberals and would attract leftist youth; and leftist journalists who are opposed to violence and hence plant confusion in the minds of Montonero guerrilla fighters. . . .

The Triple A [American Anti-Communist Alliance] engages in killing Montoneros, or those they assume to be Montoneros; they murder liberal politicians because their demands for legal trials of arrested are regarded as a form of complicity with the Left; they murder defense lawyers of arrested Montoneros, regarding them as a branch of the guerrilla force; and they murder writers and leftist journalists, even though the latter may be anti-guerrilla, because their denunciations of right-wing terrorism are regarded as weakening the repressive will of Argentine society.

Jacobo Timerman courageously located himself not in the middle, because there is no middle between these orders of violence, but outside. He was a democrat, pleading vainly for a return to legality. He felt no fascination for what he calls "terrorist sensuality." In 1975 he maintained that "the only recourse left for preserving the existing political institutions was to make use of all legal channels in order to put an end to all brands of violence, and that the army was the only group in a position to do this." And when the army seized power in 1976 Timerman "breathed a sigh of relief."

It was not long, however, before the Videla regime unleashed, in the name of peace and public order, a savage repression, which Timerman characterizes as "intrinsic, systemized, rationally planned terrorism. Each officer of a military region had his own prisons, prisoners, and forms of justice." When the Argentinian authorities elected to fight terror with terror Timerman went into opposition. *La Opinion* published lists of those who were arrested, and demanded to know the whereabouts of those who disappeared. There was a day on which Timerman was sentenced to death by both the paramilitaries and the Trotskyists. ("The incident struck me as so brutal and comical . . . I felt genuinely curious to know who would wind up with my

corpse.") The government tried to cripple his paper with economic sanctions. Finally the army confiscated it, and decorated its editor with electrodes.

Timerman now lives in Israel, an Argentine in exile, a Jew at home. He has written a book, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*,¹ which is one of the century's great works of conscience. The book is a series of ruminations on torture and tyranny, on the political and moral meaning of Timerman's experience. His descriptions of the Argentinian dungeons—"I'd move an arm or a leg merely to view a movement that was non-violent"—are shattering. Timerman bitterly indicts the soldiers who strapped him to the rack, the politicians who tolerated and even justified his torments, the society that surrendered to all this sadism. He believes his life was saved by the intervention of the Carter administration's Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights Patricia Derian, and he enjoins his readers with great eloquence to oppose dictatorship in Argentina as they oppose it elsewhere. General Haig has remarked that there are other experts on Argentina, but Timerman does not come as an expert. He comes as a witness. And his testimony is impugned.

Shortly after Timerman's book appeared it was attacked by Irving Kristol in the *Wall Street Journal* and by William Buckley in the *Daily News*. The attack was personal and political. (Buckley even had the impertinence to scold Timerman for his "manners.") The professor and the patrician fear that Timerman is bringing comfort to their adversaries, as no doubt he is; but their adversaries are not, in the main, America's. Timerman is no more accountable for comfort he brings to Stalinists than Kristol for comfort he brings to the John Birch Society. Timerman is no tool. He has not, as Kristol maintains, "cast himself in the role of a Solzhenitsyn-of-the-

¹ *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, by Jacobo Timerman; transl. by Toby Talbot (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981, \$10.95).

left," as "symbol and spokesman for those who are less interested in using the 'human rights' issue against left-wing . . . nations . . . than against the right-wing . . . governments." Timerman's hostility to the Soviet slavery is plain. He does not believe, however, that anticommunism requires the blood of thousands of innocent Argentinians.

The personal attack upon Timerman has to do with the reason for his arrest, which was not, according to Kristol, "simply because he was left-wing." He proposes instead that it was the consequence of Timerman's association with David Graiver, an Argentinian high roller who vanished in a plane crash. Graiver was responsible for the collapse of two American banks, from which he plundered as much as \$40 million; he managed the Mon-

toneros' money (ransoms have made Argentinian terrorists quite affluent); and he owned half of Timerman's newspaper. "It was after these allegations were made public," writes Kristol, "that Jacobo Timerman was arrested, along with members of the Graiver family." Arrested, indeed! No charges were ever filed. Timerman's flat was besieged, a blanket was thrown over his head, he was hustled off somewhere without being told why, a pistol was put to his head, he was tied to the table through which the electricity flowed. Is Irving Kristol suggesting in the *Wall Street Journal* that torture is an appropriate way to get at the truth about white-collar crime? Kristol knows, too, that no evidence was ever produced, not even by the wretched man's diligent prosecutors, that links Timerman to Graiver's

Catch-22 or Reaganite Political Theory

- Totalitarian rule is by definition difficult to overthrow from within, for the term "totalitarian" was adopted to characterize regimes that not only suppressed their domestic political opponents but subjected all forms of autonomous group life to political penetration and control. The concept is invaluable in understanding the terrifying politics of the 20th century, but it cannot by itself provide clear-cut directives for the conduct of foreign policy by nontotalitarian states.

- The Western democracies opposed Germany under Hitler and after the war their former totalitarian ally, the Soviet Union—not because these nations were totalitarian, but because they were great military powers threatening their neighbors. The nations of Eastern Europe have governments modeled on that of the Soviet Union imposed upon them and maintained in power to this day by the military might of the U.S.S.R. The examples of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland show that they are clearly not immune to popular *internal* revolt. The Soviet leaders profess to believe in the "irreversibility of the transition to socialism" (the basis of the Brezhnev Doctrine) and are prepared to use military force, most recently in Afghanistan, to uphold it. They can do this because the Soviet Union is a great power, a fact that is independent of the distinction between totalitarianism and other forms of political rule. Hannah Arendt, the leading theorist of

totalitarianism, wrote that "the totalitarian dictator rules his own country like a foreign conqueror." But this statement does not deny the difference between domestic rule and foreign conquest.

- Spokesmen for the Reagan administration, politically sophisticated about the novelty and distinctiveness of totalitarianism, have argued that the United States ought to support "merely" authoritarian states, even ones that brutally exploit and oppress their subjects, against domestic oppositions striving to overthrow them by force. The Reagan people's rationale is that these oppositions receive some support from the Soviet Union and its Communist allies and contain in any case a "totalitarian potential," too, should they come to power.

- But if the United States follows this practice and props up unstable authoritarian regimes, then these regimes become incapable of being overthrown in exactly the same way that is true of the allegedly "totalitarian" Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Thus the very distinction between totalitarian and authoritarian, insofar as it is based on the claim that the latter but not the former are vulnerable to successful revolts, is nullified by the "praxis" inferred from the "theory" asserting the distinction in the first place. A most illuminating example of a Catch-22, or, more portentously, of an inherent contradiction between theory and practice.

D. W. □

schemes. No matter. The Argentinian authorities, according to Kristol, had cause. Of course they did; Timerman was printing facts that embarrassed them.

The political attack upon Timerman is only a little less contemptible. It goes to the heart of the neoconservative view of the world, which the present Administration shares. Timerman is accused of confounding evils. He compares his sufferings to the sufferings of the Soviets' victims, and thereby, it is argued, blurs a fundamental distinction. That is the old distinction, which Jeane Kirkpatrick has installed as the basic principle of American foreign policy, between totalitarianism and authoritarianism. There is merit to this distinction, as political taxonomy. Totalitarian systems of government have ideological and structural features—a fearfully centralized bureaucratic control over all aspects of the individual's existence—which authoritarian systems do not; the latter rule without a philosophy of history, and they are indifferent to an amount of freedom in unpolitical lives. Totalitarianism, moreover, has an international agenda; it is a danger beyond its own borders, which authoritarianism is not. (As Timerman writes, "Argentina did not implement its thesis on an international scale; it remained a domestic affair in a country whose destiny was not of world interest.")

This distinction between dictatorships has furnished the Reagan administration, and its intellectuals, not only with an analysis; the difference between totalitarianism and authoritarianism, they say, is moral. The conclusion drawn is that the United States must be "hard" on totalitarianism and "soft" on authoritarianism. But more people are murdered by the state in Argentina than in Czechoslovakia, more in Guatemala than in Romania; and it is nothing less than the totality of a man's life that a junta controls when he has been buried in its prisons. There is a term missing from the discussion, as Norman Podhoretz would say, and the missing term is fascism. That is the precise description of the methods of power and the symbols of power that the authoritarians employ. But fascism, which used to be fought, is now flattered.

This flattery was conspicuous in Kirkpatrick's 1979 *Commentary* essay, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," which the president enormously admires. There the "traditional autocracies" south of the border are portrayed as something like the embodiment of the ideals of Edmund Burke. "They worship traditional gods and observe traditional taboos. They do not disturb the habitual rhythms of work and leisure, habitual places of residence, habitual patterns of family and personal relations."

This, Argentina? Visitors tell of a place much less wholesome. They describe a country in an advanced stage of civil chaos and moral decay, of brutality and lawlessness, of a sexual spoliation so profound it has distorted the very character of society. Politics, for this "traditional autocracy," is only the continuation of war by other means. Its political universe, by most accounts, consists of gangsters, who govern, and terrorists; and fear of the terrorists has been replaced by fear of the gangsters. This government raids its citizenry. Its many instruments of force "disturb" people at work and people at leisure. Timerman was even "disturbed" in his habitual place of residence.

As for the sanctity of the family, Timerman recounts, in a shocking passage, how it is routinely violated:

Of all the dramatic situations I witnessed in clandestine prisons, nothing can compare to those family groups who were tortured often together, sometimes separately but in view of one another, or in different cells, while one was aware of the other being tortured. The entire affective world, constructed over the years with utmost difficulty, collapses with a kick in the father's genitals, a smack on the mother's face, an obscene insult to the sister, or the sexual violation of a daughter. Suddenly an entire culture based on familial love, devotion, the capacity for mutual sacrifice collapses. . . . It was the true end of the civilization I'd been reared in. . . . It all wound up in a fresh moan from a beloved person being tortured. . . .

The disposition of power in Argentina, then, is not quite so morally estimable. Is a torturer less guilty because he believes in God? May liberty be trampled upon when it's

not done in the name of Lenin? The distinction between totalitarianism and authoritarianism as made by Kirkpatrick only makes the world safe for fascism. It is not a moral distinction, except for the macro-morality of the cold war, according to which whatever is bad for the Russians is good. What is bad for the Russians *is* good, but that is because they are the most formidable offender against the standard of morality in politics that the 18th century, in a sublime bout of universalism, called human rights. The idea of human rights is the moral essence of anticommunism, the consideration that promotes the interests of the United States into the interests of the world. Timmerman's critics are giving anticommunism a bad name. They are robbing it of its reason. They, who are unmoved by many regions of misery, who classify crimes to give some cover, who slander the victims of governments they like, make opposition to the Soviet Union seem little more than a political preference.

There is another argument for letting the Argentinians get away with it, which is that it is a practical matter. The alliance with Argentina is defended as a strategic necessity in the effort to prevent the expansion of Soviet influence. This argument does not require that Americans admire Argentina, only that they make common cause with it. It may be an unsavory country, but it is anti-Communist; it may not be exactly free, but it is a friend. And this would not be the first time that the United States had the help of scoundrels in the fight for freedom; it fought in alliance with Stalin, after all, to defeat Hitler. A soft line on Argentina, it is argued, is sound geopolitics.

This is not as sensible as it seems. The Argentinian contribution to the defeat of the Soviet Union is not very great. The generals are hoarse with denunciations of communism, but they display a notable ease in doing business with the Bolsheviks, even to the extent of fracturing American policy. The grain embargo of last year, which was the only concrete American retort to the seizure of Afghanistan, was undone by Argentina,

which coolly made up the wheat; and Argentina frequently collaborates with the Soviets at the United Nations.

But there is a more important reason for going slowly in the support of such right-wing regimes. Greece and Portugal are cautionary examples, from which the neoconservatives draw all the wrong conclusions. Authoritarianism in those countries did indeed yield to democracy, but no thanks to the United States. All that America earned with its support of the strongmen was the enmity of whole peoples. It is now a serious political liability in those political cultures to be pro-American. Surely, the struggle against Soviet imperialism is not furthered by setting the United States against the populations of these countries. It is rather a short-sighted interpretation of the American interest; the juntas come and go, but the people, who will not put up with punishment forever, remain. They do not, to be sure, flock to the revolution, as the apologists for extremism on the left claim, but they will, sooner or later, have their freedoms; and the United States will be held to account for having stood in their way.

Of course, there are instances of conflict in which a center does not come forward, in which the United States has to choose between monsters who are Communists and monsters who are not, but that may be in part because the protection of the United States cannot be counted upon by democrats who are weighing the risk. It is, in any event, that same possibility for change that the neoconservatives celebrate about authoritarianism—the characteristic impermanence of regimes that are rooted in nothing more than an army—which should dissuade the United States from making a very bad bet.

Totalitarianism, according to the neoconservatives, is wickedly incapable of what Kirkpatrick calls “progressive liberalization and democratization,” while authoritarianism, as in Greece and Portugal, has often given way to democracy. Authoritarianism, they claim, has a place for hope; not so, the other. It is hard to see what such an analysis can make of Eastern Europe, especially of Poland. Suddenly there is democracy in hell.

A totalitarian country is being transformed; and this is not the first time that such a transformation in the heart of totalitarianism has been tried. If it fails in Poland, as it failed in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, that will be not because of Leninism, but because of the Russian army. The people of Poland suffer from ideology, but they suffer more from empire. There totalitarianism, too, has a place for hope, because it comes from outside, and from above. It is artificial; and therefore it is in need of tanks. The system of evil that Kirkpatrick calls supreme is, above all, airless, but there is air in Poland. There is even a little air in the Polish Communist party. An open society is pressing to be born—out of a totalitarian society. It should give the Reaganoids pause. It won't.

The satraps of South America are our friends, and so we can influence them to change their ways; but we must not influence them to change their ways, because they are our friends. Thus the neoconservatives. It is casuistry. (Kirkpatrick, in particular, is a gifted casuist; current political discourse offers few examples of the art more fine than

her observation that "the doctrine of human rights" is problematic because it "makes illegitimate the use of force by governments.") Support for human rights is not support for revolution.

The United States is not being asked to topple the Argentinian regime. It is being asked to remonstrate with it, quietly or loudly, but with grim resolve, for the sake of the unhappy victims, and for the solidarity of the free world. The remonstrations may take many forms. Sakharov has proposed a useful rule: "a specific human rights matter can be solved only when it has become a political problem for the leaders of a violator country." A political problem—no more, but no less. Let the junta reform itself; it will gain what it most lacks, and that is legitimacy. The alliance against communism will surely be strengthened. There will be no reform, however, unless the junta is convinced that the United States is angry. But it sees no anger in Washington; it sees only good will.

There is no doubt that if the terrorists in Argentina had won, they would have transformed the country into a totalitarianism and

In God We Trust?

- Prompted by Michael Walzer's article "Totalitarianism vs. Authoritarianism," on page 400, I should like to present a less sophisticated dilemma as articulated by our President and General Haig. Pressed to explain the distinction between totalitarians and authoritarians, more precisely how you use the distinction to determine who is friend or foe, they have come up with the blinding answer: friends (however tyrannical) believe in God; enemies do not.

- In international relationships this can get very entangled. Suppose a nation believes in more than one god, is that the same as believing in God? Take it down to cases: We are about to sell arms to China. So far as we know they are atheists but it might be said that until recently they did believe in a sort of God, M-o Z-g (Lest His Name Be Taken in Vain). Seems far-fetched, and I certainly do not want to pursue this through the 120-plus nations, but it does raise an eyebrow, does it not?

- But what about the members of this Administration? Suppose we take the Office of Budget and Management and its chief, David Stockman. What god do they and he worship, these weirdos who believe in human sacrifice? Satan?

- And what about the international staff? Can it be said for all of them that they trust in God, and if they do not, how in hell can we depend on them for a plain foreign policy? There is Jeane Kirkpatrick. Does she believe in God? I haven't heard. What about her deputies? I could be wrong, but does Carl Gershman believe in God? Tattletale though I be, I was under the impression that he listed toward atheism or, at least, agnosticism. As for nongovernmental clagues, how are we to know, under the simple guidelines as proclaimed, whether Irving Kristol, Midge Decter, and their affiliated cultists are friend or foe? Granted, religion and belief should be a private matter, but then I've only tried to clarify a piece of policy. And I didn't raise it first, anyway.

E.G. □

might have put it at the service of the Soviet Union. And there also is no doubt that terrorism must be dealt with harshly, and that the harshness may spill over into the society. Timerman does not deny this. He knows what awaited him at the hands of the left. ("I would have been placed against a wall and shot.") There is a difference, however, between a government at war with an insurrection and a government at war with a population. Those who make the apology for Argentina do not know this difference. They do not see that the purgatory of Argentina no longer has very much to do with the terrorist threat. The terrorists, it is commonly agreed, have been defeated. The apparatus of repression that defeated them remains. Still worse: Argentina has become a collection of petty warlords, each with his own troops and torturers, who together keep the central authority at bay. It is not the great anti-Communist phalanx that the Reagan administration imagines; its form of political organization might be called a feudal security state. All these military machines now run on their own momentum, in a kind of general derangement. The repression has outlived its justification. But not for Timerman's critics.

The expostulations of Timerman's critics come down to this: that the United States is too weak, morally and politically, to fight fascism while it fights communism. There has always been a strain of defeatism in the neo-conservatives' reading of international affairs—as when they conclude about any nation that deals, however slightly, with the Soviet Union, or any movement that makes reference, however rhetorically, to Marx, that it is lost to the free world. And now they come along to say that the fight against fascism is more than this country can afford. It would confuse its citizens, whose sense of purpose is not yet healed of "the Vietnam syndrome"; and it would divert the resources of the United States, the morsels of military and political might that remain, from the competition with the Russians. The neo-conservatives talk tough, but they are afraid. The barbarians are coming. They are at the gates. And Timerman has come to distract us from

the danger. He is sapping the nation's will. All those columns about Argentina that could have been about Russia. . . . Timerman is foiling the philosophy, and he is foiling the plan. The beautiful people weep for him, while his other supporters prepare to hand the country over. Get Timerman.

Never mind that night has fallen and the barbarians have not come; the danger is real. But the fight against communism is not hurt by Timerman. It is hurt by the government of Argentina, and by governments like it. It is they, America's anti-Communist allies, who create the conditions in which communism can look like liberation. Timerman puts it succinctly: "A government that adopts legal methods of repressing violence prevents the guerrillas from finding circumstantial allies among democratic men who are unable to accept the use of methods that inevitably recall those of Hitler, Stalin, or Idi Amin." These governments provide their own enemies, and ours, with something much more deadly than arms—they provide them with plausibility.

It is not the antifascism of American liberals that threatens to rob the American people of moral clarity, but the anti-antifascism of American conservatives. Timerman has exposed many things, and one of them is the malevolence of the American right, old and new. The American people are instructed by Reagan's advocates, and by the Administration too, that they may judge the ruin of a family or the murder of a man according to its political convenience. An official of the United States government (Carl Gershman) plants a pack of lies in a newspaper column (William Buckley's) to make Timerman out as a friend of terrorists. These people have inquisitorial tendencies. They are maddened by ideology; and not since William Kunstler announced that he "does not believe in the public denunciation of socialist countries" has the difference between morality and ideology been made so clear. Indeed, in its campaign against Timerman the New Right has reproduced some of the most repulsive features of the New Left—its doctrinal delirium, its raging thirst for the destruction of anything or

anybody that is uncongenial to its picture of the world. It is now the “new nationalists” who warn that if you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem.

The issue is not anticommunism; Timerman, and many of his defenders, need no lessons in combating Soviet totalitarianism. The issue is whether or not one may tell the truth about Argentina, and other authoritarianisms, without being accused of stabbing America in the back. Timerman’s captors could not comprehend that he could do battle with both the Montoneros and the military, and his critics have copied his captors. They cannot comprehend that he, and we, can do battle with both communism and fascism.

The captors and the critics say that it is a national emergency. Some of them agree that “the third world war” has begun. They are crazy. Terrorism must be wiped out, but it is not simply a military problem. The Soviets must be faced down, but the beastly colonels will not accomplish that. And the United States need not look on helplessly as everything it stands for is debauched. This nation has not been laid so low.

The United States has the power to make the case for human rights, and it has the privilege.

Jacobo Timerman fell not merely into the hands of authoritarians; he fell into the hands of Nazis. And he was a Jew.

Timerman was tortured under pictures of Hitler. He was taunted for his “clipped prick.” His interrogators wanted to know about the Andinia plan, the Jewish plot to take over the territory in the south, “the road to Antarctica.” They believed that Zbigniew Brzezinski was a Jew who led a Jewish conspiracy against Latin America, which Timerman represented in Argentina. They brandished *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. They were sure that Menahem Begin was tutoring the Montoneros.

Timerman, in short, was not a plain political prisoner. He was, for the security forces of Argentina, something special, an uncommon kind of villain, who deserved something more. He describes the difference:

In Argentina, the attitude of military examiners or police toward left-wing terrorists was the way you might feel toward an enemy. Sometimes, because of the individual nature of the people involved, or a passing frame of mind, it was even a relationship of mutual adversaries. These political prisoners were not spared when it came to torture or murder; but the psychological relationship was simple—confrontation with one’s enemy or adversary, and the desire to destroy, to eliminate that individual.

With Jews, however, there was a desire to eradicate. Interrogating enemies was a job; but interrogating Jews was a pleasure or a curse. Torturing a Jewish prisoner always yielded a moment of entertainment to the Argentine security forces, a certain pleasurable, leisurely moment. . . . One could hate a political prisoner for belonging to the opposite camp, but one could also try to convince him, turn him around, make him understand his error, switch sides, get him to work for you. But how can a Jew be changed? . . . The enemy can be converted; he wasn’t born an enemy. The Jew was born a Jew.

Among the contributions of Timerman’s book is an anatomy of the authoritarian mentality. In Argentina that mentality included a diabolical anti-Semitism. “They hated Zionism more than communism. . . . They regarded Israel as a more dangerous foe than Russia.” (A little like Reagan’s other allies, the Saudis.) The ideologues of the military dictatorship proclaimed that

Argentina has three enemies: Karl Marx, because he tried to destroy the Christian concept of society; Sigmund Freud, because he tried to destroy the Christian concept of the family; and Albert Einstein, because he tried to destroy the Christian concept of time and space.

And it was lost on nobody that all these enemies were Jews. Timerman reports that the Jewish question dominated virtually all his interrogations. He seems to have been prepared, if that is possible, for an old-fashioned right-wing repression, but not for the extra measure of brutality, the extra kicks and the extra volts, that befell him as a Jew. His torturers’ obsession with the Jews, their hallucinations about history that reached into the high councils of government, terri-

fied him. He was repeating the fate of his forefathers, and it filled him with despair.

Timerman's book is about this Jewish despair. He sounds a tocsin for the Jews of Argentina. They are, he insists, in danger. Their predicament is not unlike the predicament of the Jews of Germany. He wants them to raise their voices, to resist. And for this, too, Timerman is attacked.

Perhaps the most disgraceful aspect of the campaign against Timerman is that it was begun by Jews. The main lines of attack were established in *Midstream* magazine in December 1980.² Timerman is accused of exaggerating. The situation of Argentine Jewry, he is admonished, is not nearly so dire. There is no Holocaust there. The Jews, in fact, are flourishing. And the strong arm of the military falls upon all the citizens of the country, not only upon its Jews. Timerman himself was not arrested for being Jewish; quite the contrary, he was freed for it.

Timerman's Jewish critics misrepresent him. There is certainly not, as the *New York Times* shrieked, "the Final Solution in Argentina"; but Timerman never said there was. "There are no gas chambers in Argentina." His analogy was with Germany from 1933 to 1939; and while there are crucial differences between Argentina in the '70s and Germany in the '30s, there are also similarities between the kinds of violence with which these Jewries met and, more ominously, between the kinds of ideology that were used to justify them.

² The article was called "Don't Rescue Latin American Jews!" and it was by Benno Weiser Varon, a retired Israeli diplomat who has many friends in Latin America. Kristol and the others learned of David Graiver, no doubt gladly, from Varon. The political character of Varon is epitomized in this bit from a piece about his years in Paraguay: "President Stroessner was a soldier and as such he could not fail to admire the prowess of Israel's army. Now that Hitler's Germany was only a memory, he was firmly in the American camp because he hated the Communists." Varon, apparently, can forgive a lot. He has forgiven Timerman's torturers, too. They brutalized Timerman for information about Andinia and the Elders of Zion, about which Varon comments "Not all the questioning was hostile, there was also some genuine intellectual curiosity." *Midstream* is to be congratulated for having conquered its hysteria.

Nazism in Argentina is not a new phenomenon, nor is it marginal, and the resurgence of Nazi literature and organizations in the past decade has been scrupulously documented.³ Moreover, Timerman never said he was detained because he was a Jew. "In view of the sort of journalism I practiced, the possibility of my arrest and assassination fit into the rules of the game." Timerman's claim, however, is that in prison he became paramountly a Jew. Zionism, not socialism, was uppermost in the twisted minds of the men who beat him. And he was saved not because he was a Jew, but because he was a famous Jew. Dissidents everywhere know that fame is their sole means of survival.

It is hard to know with any certainty about the peril of Argentina's Jews. There are too many mixed signals. The view that there is no reason for alarm, however, is ridiculous. Timerman's critics say that the Jews of Argentina are "doing well," that they are prominent and prosperous, that they are not leaving Argentina. All this, of course, was true of Germany in the early Hitler years, too. The persecution of the Jews in Germany should have established at least that wealth and assimilation, economic advantage and social success are no guarantee of political safety. Nor is the failure of Argentina's Jews to cry foul the evidence that all is well. Germany, again, should have established something about the morale of people who live in fear. When Timerman's book was published the head of the Jewish community in Buenos Aires arranged a press conference at which he pleaded for quiet. He must have had a reason.

As Jabotinsky said, there is the anti-Semitism of men and the anti-Semitism of things. Whatever the extent of anti-Semitism in Argentinian society, and it appears to be considerable, it is the anti-Semitism of things. The Jews of Argentina are not confronted, as are the Jews of the United States, with iso-

³ See Robert Weisbrot, *The Jews of Argentina* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979); his "The Siege of the Argentine Jews," in the *New Republic*, June 27, 1981; and "Human Rights in Argentina: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on International Organizations," Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, Sept. 28-29, 1976.

lated anti-Semitic incidents, but with a tradition in Argentinian politics. Many sectors of the society have been infected; and the military, in whose world view these satanic myths play an important part, is running riot. The Jewish leaders of Argentina have chosen to deal. The psychology of such a choice is all too familiar, though Timerman's comparison with the Judenräte is really cruel. Yet they may be making a fatal mistake. There are evils with which you cannot deal. They can only be fought and, with the help of the Jews of the free world and their governments, perhaps overcome. But there is no fight, and there is no help.

The attack upon this Jewish hero by these American Jews is profoundly disturbing. Why have some American Jewish intellectuals shown him such hostility, and some American Jewish organizations such reserve? Why are they so driven to discredit him? In part, no doubt, because they are sincerely confused about the circumstances in Argentina, and will not rush into a reaction that might worsen them. Politics, too, is a significant factor. American Jews are not prepared to suffer a disappointment so soon. It was only yesterday that they decided that Jimmy Carter was the enemy of the Jews and Ronald Reagan their friend. The new conservatives in particular have a lot riding on the correctness of President Reagan's vision. It is their principles that will be responsible for policies that will determine the destiny of Jews in Argentina, the Soviet Union, and of course Israel; and they had better be right. Yes, they had better be.

But there is something more behind the complaisance of American Jews in this matter. Norman Podhoretz summed it up. He told the *New York Times* that "the real question is whether the Jews in Argentina are facing a Holocaust, whether the situation is so serious that Jews should flee for their lives." Now that is precisely *not* the real question; or, rather, it should not be. Timerman has not called the crisis in Argentina a Holocaust, and he has not called upon the Jews to

flee. The real question is whether the Jews in that country are in trouble.

The Timerman affair has dramatically disclosed the hold of the Holocaust upon the political perception of American Jews. They have become habituated to it. It is the controlling compulsion of their culture. A standard for Jewish suffering has been established: it starts at six million. The suffering of the Jews in Argentina does not meet that standard; it falls, fortunately, far short. It does not, therefore, exactly qualify as an emergency. The Jews are used to the very worst; and so they are more concerned to know that Argentina is not the worst than to know that Argentina is bad.

Timerman anticipated all this: "What you can say is that recent events in Argentina have demonstrated that if an anti-Semitic scenario unfolds, the discussion on what constitutes anti-Semitism and persecution and what does not will occupy more time than the battle against anti-Semitism." That is precisely what his critics are up to. There is no Auschwitz in Argentina, they say; it is a false alarm.

How much has to happen to a Jew before the Jews speak up? What is the definition of danger? The answer, after the extermination of the Jews in Europe, is simple: *any danger at all*. Jews should be stirred, not soothed, by what is taking place in Argentina. They should put the anti-Semites of the world on notice that they will have to answer to the power of the Jews in the United States and the power of the Jews in Israel. They should express their determination to make anti-Semitic abominations of any kind a "political problem." Nobody is suggesting, as one of Timerman's critics wrote, that Jews "dismantle" the community in Argentina, only that they defend it. And that they not delude themselves that there is no need.

Timerman's analysis of the condition of the Jews in Argentina should be heard in full, not merely because it has been misrepresented, but because it is wise:

Many times I've been asked whether a Holocaust is conceivable in Argentina. Well, that depends on what is meant by a Holocaust. . . .

If we cared to formulate a historical equation, we could say that the conditions do exist: a profound political crisis, an economic crisis with an annual 170 percent rate of inflation that has lasted for several years, impotence on the part of the political parties to come up with a minimally coherent response, the incapacity of the Jewish community to face straightforwardly its own reality, a totalitarian mentality among the majority sectors of the population, with a serious tendency toward messianic beliefs. If the outbreak of anti-Semitism has not until now assumed greater and more pronounced characteristics, that is because the balance of power within the armed forces has been under permanent debate in recent years, with the moderates weighing the potential international repercussions and concluding that these would be hard to withstand.

There are no gas chambers in Argentina, and this leaves many with a clear conscience. Yet between 1974 and 1978 the violation of Jewish girls in clandestine prisons had a peculiar characteristic: Jewish girls were violated twice as often as non-Jewish girls. Must all anti-Semitism wind up in soap? If so, then anti-Semitism does not exist in Argentina, and it becomes a matter of accidental, coincidental situations, as the leaders of the Argentine Jewish community claim. But can there be anti-Semitism without soap?

The behavior of certain prominent American Jewish writers and groups toward this man does not inspire confidence in their political judgment or moral authority. They make haste to point out that Timerman did not

suffer the most. They cleave to a kind of anticommunism that could not care less about many of their brethren. They surrender their support to an Administration whose pro-Jewish words are many and pro-Jewish deeds few. And they provide their foes on the left with a rare opportunity to act like their friends. (Alexander Cockburn, for example, rose at once to play Zola. "Sitting comfortably in New York City," he observed in the course of one of his briefs for Timerman, "I do not feel it especially appropriate to discourse on the best way to ensure the continuing well-being of the Jews in Argentina." That is the funniest sentence he has ever written.)⁴

This, then, is their final word on torture in Argentina. It is not Hitler, and the goyim are catching it, too. Some consolation. □

P.S.: *Commentary* published, in its July issue, a long rejoinder to Timerman by Mark Falcoff. Not much new here. Timerman, we are told, "was not a great defender of liberal democratic values"—though it is difficult to see what other values were served by *La Opinion's* register of missing persons. Further proof of Timerman's dubious liberalism is his support of the coup in 1976. The man is damned if he does, and damned if he doesn't. And there is this rather remarkable paragraph:

As is necessarily the case in any urban setting where the forces of order must contend with the virtual invisibility of the enemy, a blanket repression is often the only means which offers any hope of success. In such situations—let us not mince words—the distinction between terrorist and suspect, between sympathizer and activist, indeed, between innocent and guilty, is often lost—but in the end the job can be done, if there is the will to do it.

Love,

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE □

⁴ Timerman's critics like to cite his description of Israel as "fascist." He is said to have made the repulsive remark in conversation; to my knowledge all that he has said in print is that there are tendencies in Israeli politics that produce in him a fear of fascism. That, too, is hyperbole, Israel's new minister of defense notwithstanding. Timerman's commitment to Israel is not to be impugned; see, for example, his moving essay "Coming Home" in the *New Republic* (Dec. 21, 1979). His book deserves to be counted among the classics of Zionism. Perhaps that, too, makes some American Jews nervous.

Barbara Probst Solomon

The Jean Harris Story

Stendhal's Daughter Adrift in Scarsdale

FOR STANLEY PLASTRIK

The Jean Harris trial has mesmerized Americans. It has received an unprecedented amount of publicity. Diana Trilling, Shana Alexander, and Lally Weymouth, daughter of Katherine Graham, owner of the *Washington Post*, have been commissioned to write books on the subject; in a Columbia University elevator was scrawled FREE JEAN HARRIS. Immediately after the trial Ellen Burstyn starred in a TV drama, *The People vs. Jean Harris*. Jennifer Jones has contracted to do a movie on the subject. Why has this case aroused so much furor? An ordinary despondent, rejected middle-aged woman goes to the home of her lover, who has replaced her with a younger woman—she makes a distraught attempt to kill herself—the only question to be solved is whether this was indeed a suicide attempt gone wrong, or whether it was a more conventional case of *crime passionnel*. How does this tragic mess end up becoming first-page news over a period of three months?

The Harris case shatters several American myths. Despite the cool instructions given to American women by modern analysts, by group therapy, sex therapy, and that last great breed of valiant optimists—the American feminists—the human condition of the average American woman is closer to the universal condition of woman than most observers of the American scene would like to believe. As motherhood, wifehood, or grandmotherhood has no special status in this country, in many ways the typical woman, as she grows older, is deprived of a basic honoring of her life's "work." In soap-opera movies such as *An Unmarried Woman* Jill Clayburgh, who is rejected by her husband, looks younger than her daughter, and soon has a

famous artist madly in love with her, urging on Jill happiness and sexual fulfillment in his Soho pad. Meanwhile, after midnight, American cable television goes porno: "midnight blue" films the ritual group-sex scenes, the hosts of the various sex clubs give over the TV channels the telephone numbers of the clubs and escort services for both men and women.

Despite this barrage of zapped-up sex, many Americans are walking about still locked into the lonely sadness engendered by their old-fashioned 19th-century hearts. We are not a nation of Marilyn Monroes, Jane Fondas, chick feminists, or Vanessa Redgraves; it is the very *ordinariness* of Jean Harris's ordeal to which Americans respond. She represents the misery of real life suffered, rather than the mythic American plan in which nobody gets hurt and everyone has the illusory option of a fresh start. It was as though Jean Harris's act of desperation had suddenly cut through our national puritanical censorship, which prohibits empathy for the aging woman, and every American woman "became" Jean Harris.

Another myth shattered in this trial is that America is a society of equals rather than a stratified society with class barriers. Jean Harris had upper-class mores; the jury, which found her guilty, was "just plain folk." Bolen, the prosecuting attorney, portrayed Harris to the press and the jury as an undemocratic and unrepentant member of the super privileged. Was reverse class prejudice a big factor in the jury's unanimous, harsh verdict of guilty?

We are used to writing impassioned protests concerning unfair treatment of blacks by white juries in the South, we know that Dreyfus was sent to Devil's Island because he was a Jew, but progressives have always been highly

selective in their choices for compassion—the rights of the WASP upper class have never come high on the injustice priority list. But to understand who Jean Harris and Herman Tarnower really were, one must roll back to the America of their youth.

Both Tarnower and Harris may have been victimized by their *idealization* of upper-class values, but neither of them were from that background. Jean Harris came from a “nice” Cleveland, Ohio, family. She went to private school in a “nice suburb”—the Laurel School in Shaker Heights, her father was a middle-rung army officer, she was one of those midwestern girls coming of age in the late 1930s whose tremendous vulnerability was their awe of the magical East. The Atlantic Seaboard was mysterious territory to the conquered by Fitzgerald’s Middle America Gatsbys—the East was the ultimate terrain of Ivy League colleges, New York “artistic culture”—a world peopled by exotic Jews and blacks. The model female writer would have been Dorothy Parker, the model movie actress Katherine Hepburn in *A Philadelphia Story*. Jean Harris believed in those myths. She graduated in 1945 from Smith with top honors. She married, had two sons, divorced and supported herself and her children by becoming headmistress in a variety of fashionable Eastern secondary schools for women. First she taught in Connecticut; at the time of Tarnower’s death she was headmistress at Madeira, a huge sprawl of a school whose gracious buildings overlook the Potomac outside Washington, D.C. Traditionally, Madeira produces high-boned blondes—young Grace Kellys—who ride horseback well, have fine manners and have been provided the polished rudiments afforded by an old-fashioned conservative academia. The school has an indoor riding rink and eight tennis courts.

Last March, when Tarnower was shot, he was preparing to celebrate his seventieth birthday—Jean Harris, then, was fifty-six years old. For Harris, to be headmistress of Madeira, to be the mistress of a diamond-in-the-rough Jewish doctor *was* the myth—and

indeed one of the reasons the intelligent Jean Harris was so incapable of making concrete demands on those whose world she inhabited was that she lived inside her own myth. She never sought any of the protections of a more pragmatic woman. Like many Americans she was rootless—in Madeira she was living as handmaiden to the children of the rich, her genteel home of faded Southern grandeur was lent to her by the school’s administration. On Tarnower’s suburban Harrison, N.Y. estate she was also—over 14 years—the shadowy female guest. Jean Harris ruefully commented to writer Shana Alexander, “My sons can say their mother died of dumbness.”

Not dumbness—Jean Harris is an intelligent woman—but she was a midwestern innocent severely hampered by being locked into the mores of another era. When Tarnower, in the early phase of their romance, gave her a ten-carat diamond ring to celebrate their engagement, and soon panicked at the idea of marriage, Jean Harris felt impelled to act the lady. She returned the diamond, and asked him to keep the ring for her in his bank. Eventually Tarnower sold the diamond and used the money for a downpayment for a home for Lynne Tryforos, Jean Harris’s young rival. A more realistic woman would have acknowledged to herself that she was Tarnower’s mistress, that she was cash-short and he was rich, would have kept the ring, sold it, invested in her *own* real estate, and her own ego, and saved her own life. But American women of Jean Harris’s background and time were raised to wear white gloves and become wives, not mistresses. By returning Tarnower’s ring and telling herself that she continued to live with this man out of passion, out of weakness, Jean Harris managed to retain her image of herself as a lady, a part-time wife.

A New York City woman taxi driver commented to me on the case: “the guy’s a mean bastard, uglier than Dracula. That’s a sweet, refined lady who never did no one harm. I think she’s innocent—but say, she got a little disturbed—what woman hasn’t gotten disturbed at least once in her life? So, say, she was upset and the gun went off. Hasn’t she

suffered enough already? With all the nuts and murderers walking the streets of New York, going free for the most brutal crimes they got to make an example of this one? Why? You call that jury normal—all those women, and not one says, okay, I'll save her life—okay, so Jean Harris didn't weep. Listen, woman to woman, all that business about weeping means nothing—the worst bitch can break down and cry. But that woman is not evil. So, what's with that jury? Listen, somebody ought to tell her lawyer, when he appeals the case, get it away from that rotten bunch in Scarsdale; in Manhattan where we got real killers to worry about, we would have given Jean Harris a break.”

But the case was tried in White Plains, Westchester County, which was Tarnower's turf. Although Tarnower's lush estate was in Harrison, New York, his medical practice was in the nearby suburban town, Scarsdale. After World War II many members of the middle and upper classes moved to suburban communities within commuting distance to New York. The suburbs had neither the variety of the big cities nor the individuality of the small town. In the early 1950s Herman Tarnower moved his practice to Scarsdale, a suburb for the affluent, and formed the Scarsdale Medical Group. He established himself as society cardiologist, and apparently—although a cold man—was a good doctor to the rich. In the last few years he became a minor national celebrity as “Diet Doc,” the author of the *Scarsdale Diet Book*, which grossed millions. Tarnower's well-heeled society patients seem to have adored him. This benign view of him was not shared by many others. One of his male colleagues described him as “one of the most killable of men.”

Tarnower had his problems: he had been born ugly, dirt poor, the child of immigrant Jews, and was a man of overwhelming social ambition. Jean Harris was only, as she put it, “dumb” because she misread the cultural signals of the world she had joined in her great “East Coast adventure.” Just as black men stood for sex and jazz, Jewish men, in the eyes of wistful, wondering adventurous midwest-

ern women, were the symbol of the “good male.” Jewish men were considered to be wonderful husbands, loyal mates, good providers, and intellectually superior. Women were shrewder about men from their own cultures; Jewish women rarely romanticized the macho Jewish male and, indeed, managed to survive by making heavy demands on their men, which their WASP sisters, fearful at being considered possibly anti-Semitic, would have thought “unfair.” Women from minority cultures intuitively understood that the terrible feelings of social and professional rejection experienced by their men as they ran the rocky road of assimilation frequently produced revenge love affairs.

All cultures have a secret love story that embodies their covert national history. Mexicans perceive themselves the illegitimate sons of Indian mothers raped by Spanish conquerors and they frequently cast their women in the “Malinche” role. (Malinche was the Maya princess who deserted her people for Hernán Cortés.) Of the South, Faulkner drily observed, “it's truly about miscegenation.” The 19th-century European drama circled around class and ambition. But in the United States, more often than we admit, our hidden romance involves miscegenation, assimilation, and ambitions of class. An old American love sport has been the cross-cultural, cross-racial *affaire du coeur*.

But just as Jean Harris didn't notice that she infuriated the jury by behaving uppity, she failed to realize that much of what motivated Tarnower in his sadistic relation to a variety of women was sour vengeance. Instead, Harris tried to make her Jewish lover fit her notion of love writ on a perfect Greek vase—“Herman read Herodotus,” she explained to the jury. But Tarnower had more driving him than a fine appreciation of the classics.

In Tarnower's pre-World War II America, the battles between the German Jewish bourgeoisie and the poor Jews of Eastern Europe, from which his family came, were ferocious. The German Jews who arrived in the United States in modest number early on had made a

secure place for themselves within Protestant America. At the turn of the century, millions of Jews from Eastern Europe crowded into New York; as Irving Howe pointed out in *World of Our Fathers*, the Lower East Side, suddenly, had a density greater than Bombay; these Jews, with lice in their hair, their Yiddish, their Zionism, their overenthusiasms for God, religion, anarchism, socialism, threatened their discreet German coreligionists. Although the German Jews did good works among poor Jews, the social barriers were impenetrable. How was a poor young Jew to climb up the social ladder and become an "American" if even his own ethnic group denied him access? (Blacks, Chinese, Italians also maintain sharp class distinctions within their own groups.)

The cross-cultural love affair is a handy route. Woody Allen, Philip Roth are at least a generation younger than Tarnower; even so, their novels and movies reflect the dilemma of the young man on the way up. In *Goodbye Columbus* Roth's hero loses his true love object, the rich Jewish princess, Brenda Patemkin, who is standing firmly on prime Eastern territory, Radcliffe, to whose brother college the unpolished Rothian hero has no entry. In subsequent Roth novels, the Rothian antihero—confused and bitter over his loss of his original dream love, the Jewish princess—assumes an attitude of a plague on all your houses. The blonde WASP women are shown attempting suicide for him, the Jewish women are depicted as quarrelsome. Woody Allen, portraying Woody Allen in *Annie Hall* and *Manhattan*, also perceives his love affairs with naive midwestern beauties as proof of authentic Americanization.

Jean Harris clearly had no more of a clue what Tarnower was about than the heroine of *Annie Hall*. Late in life Tarnower, through his medical practice and his elaborate entertaining, was able to establish friendships with important people, among them the longed-for German Jewish bourgeoisie of his childhood. Jean Harris berates Tarnower for his adulation of women like Iphigene Sulzberger: but WASP Jean Harris was never part of Tarnower's true goal—she was merely part of

the decor he established in order to impress key people he fantasized about in his youth.

The *Scarsdale Diet Book* made Tarnower a celebrity and a multimillionaire; at seventy he could afford to dump his WASP upper-class Jean, and prove himself with her rival, his office assistant, thirty years his junior, good-looking but uneducated Lynne Tryforos. Tarnower—who during his 14-year liaison with Jean Harris had affairs with many other women—clearly was something of an exhibitionist. He enjoyed rotating the visits from his women and fomenting jealousies: his Belgian couple were instructed to remove each woman's belongings from his bedroom before the visit of the next rival. Suzanne van der Vreken, his housekeeper, was also instructed to keep detailed guest lists, menu lists, and a record of the visits to the Tarnower estate of his two steady mistresses. Jean Harris was aware of his other women and finally began to suffer from severe depressions. Tarnower had her on increased dosages of amphetamines, which, if taken over a long time period, can produce dangerous behavior. Jean Harris had puritanical notions of integrity and good behavior, and for many years chose to ignore Tarnower's waning interest in her, as well as Lynne's overt attacks. (In a jealous rage Lynne slashed a wardrobe-full of Jean Harris's elegant clothing.)

Finally Jean Harris's own anger broke through, she wrote Tarnower an upset furious letter referring to Lynne Tryforos as a "psychotic whore," and berating Tarnower for his behavior. That same day Jean Harris drove the five hours from Washington, D.C., with an armed gun at her side. Her story is that she intended to see Tarnower, say a quiet, despairing farewell, go to the waterlily pond on the estate grounds and shoot herself. Instead, in a bloody embattled bedroom, Tarnower was killed by four bullets, which left none for Jean to take her own life. Harris had a suicide note in her purse; she had left letters of resignation as head mistress at Madeira; several days prior to the event, she had made out her will in favor of her two grown sons.

Jean Harris undoubtedly fantasized that at

the final moment Tarnower would save her life, and their love would be rekindled. Instead—perhaps it was the sight of Lynne's nightgowns and clothes in what she considered her bedroom—Jean Harris lost control, and one form or another of a suicide-cum-crime *passionnel* occurred.

At the trial Jean Harris's problem was that instead of fighting to save her life, she decided to save her love; she sought to explain to the jury and the press the *reason* for her existence. The just-plain-folk jury was shocked at her upper-class ways, which they held against her—the jurors, and indeed many observers, were appalled that she had referred to her young rival as a whore. We Americans are more phobic than Europeans in our use of strong language—Jean Harris damaged her image in the press by describing her rival as a “whore.” In hypocritically egalitarian America, one woman sleeping with a man is presumed the equal “sister” of another woman sleeping with the same man. Ironically, poor Jean Harris was more the victim of her puritanical, suppressed upbringing than of snobbery.

If one can imagine oneself into the troubled heart and mind of Jean Harris, undoubtedly she inflicted self-torture by placing herself on personal trial for her own failure to adhere to the value system of her own time and her own place. In referring to Lynne Tryforos as a whore, she wasn't making a social distinction but was being old-fashioned female: Am I a whore? she was asking herself. No, I am Herman's wife—*she* (the other woman) is the whore. In face of a tremendous media blitz this totally private, unknown fifty-seven-year-old matron struggled to desexualize her relation to Herman Tarnower. She had two grown sons testify to the healthy family ambience of her relationship; she came dressed to the trial some days as a proper headmistress of a girl's fine finishing school; other days she showed up in the tweed suits and mink scarfs expected of suburban housewives of her age and class. In her puritanical imagination she was attempting to resolve: Am I a whore? Am I a lady? Should I have let Her-

man pay for all those trips to Paris, Nepal, and the Caribbean? Should I have let him pay for my expensive wardrobe? But I did return the ring. . . . We shared Herodotus, it was an *amour spirituel*. American women are reasonably casual about going to bed with a man, that can be considered “love”—but they become uptight if men pick up too many of the bills. We do not have a mistress psychology. American women are very puritanical about money; both liberated and nonliberated women are ambivalent about what they would permit a man to pay for. Thus, all the energy Jean Harris should have used to keep herself out of prison was spent appeasing the Middle America of her childhood—Jean Harris tried to convince the jury she was not Tarnower's mistress, but rather his wife/soul mate.

In crisp headmistress style Harris reprimanded the prosecutor for his bad grammar; she freely admitted, under cross examination, that she was not the sort of person to make friends with the servants—many observers feel that piece of snobbery may well have cost her the trial. The jury was modest and she acted as though the jury were Madeira students to whom she was explaining a Platonic ideal of life. She tried to be a gallant à la Katherine Hepburn, witty and rueful like Dorothy Parker; under an over-barrage of questions she deemed undignified, she lost her temper, but she never wept nor sought mercy from the jury. Jean Harris remained her idea of a lady. One of my women friends who comes from the South informed me that many Southerners felt that Harris had disgraced Madeira by having the 14-year affair. She should have either remarried or done without. In the South, my friend pointed out, Harris would have been ostracized for her *private* behavior—but of course no jury would have convicted her for killing Tarnower, since he hadn't behaved like a gentleman.

Unfortunately, Jean Harris gave a Southern defense in a Northern court. She infuriated the jury—instead of making clear to them that she was no whore, she convinced them she was a snob—and she lost her case.

Whatever happened in Tarnower's bedroom, I believe Jean Harris is telling the truth when she claims she is innocent, meant to kill herself, and accidentally shot Tarnower. Her problem is that four bullets were fired. In those final distressed weeks no doubt Jean Harris struggled to bridge the split between the idealized lover she carried in her head and the actual Tarnower who was rejecting her for Lynne Tryforos. After the death of the cold impostor, the man who got in the way of this all-consuming passion, the split within her mind could heal, and in her memory Tarnower is permanently fixed as the idealized lover. When Jean Harris maintains that Tarnower died trying to save her life, I do believe she is telling the truth as she now perceives it to be.

When the jurors announced the harsh sentence, guilty of second-degree murder—the only more severe charge is for killing a policeman—Americans were stunned. Suddenly it occurred to us the drama had been for real. The backlash to the verdict was immediate: the jury claimed that after an eight-day deliberation they had wept copious tears before arriving at a unanimous decision of guilty; still one detects a touch of bad faith. The press flip-flopped and more sympathetic interpretations of Jean Harris began to appear. Many Americans, especially city dwellers, felt outraged. The criminal courts in New York City are in total chaos, hardened murderers are going in and out of prison as though through a revolving door. The same week that Jean Harris was convicted John Lennon's killer was sent to a psychiatric hospital. Due to his mental confusion he will not stand trial. Two lower-class women were acquitted of crimes similar to Jean Harris's.

Americans have no provision for *crime passionnel*—what we do have, and what many criminals use to their advantage, is "plea bargaining." The defense attorney and prosecutor "bargain" for a shorter sentence, the defendant pleads guilty, and is rewarded for not using the state's money in an elaborate trial. The questions being asked by thinking people: in an attempt to prove the "fairness"

of the system, are people such as Patty Hearst and Jean Harris penalized by receiving stiffer sentences than the average citizen? Does the indiscriminate use of plea bargaining prejudice the rights of those who consider themselves innocent? Are defendants penalized for *not* plea bargaining? Why wasn't psychiatric evidence given for Mrs. Harris? Why wasn't she indicted on a lesser charge of murder, such as manslaughter? Could a plea of temporary insanity have been used?

To have plea bargained or admitted to temporary insanity would have meant, for Jean Harris, the death of the heart, the relinquishing of her idea of Herman Tarnower, a public invasion into the privacy of her troubled mind.

Ironically, this woman so phobically afraid of being mistaken for a mistress or whore may spend the next 15 years of her life in the company of hardened prostitutes. But despite her lost freedom she has remained oddly loyal to her love. Whether she has landed in jail for the next 15 years because of her inner guilts, or because Tarnower was shot, or because of the unseemly intensity of her passion, or because of reverse discrimination against her upper-class manner remains unclear. Since her incarceration at Bedford State Prison for Women Jean Harris has been permitted to watch the TV special based on transcripts of the trial. "NOW YOU CAN BE THE JUDGE: GUILTY OR INNOCENT" ran the advertisements for the hastily put-together drama. More ominous is the news, since the Harris case, that under a new ruling future trials now may be televised. Are we back in the Middle Ages, auto da fé and public trials to be used for mass entertainment? A less spectacular piece of information, but news that may have more bearing on the events that led to Jean Harris's act of desperation, is the report in the *New York Times* from social welfare agencies that women over fifty-five are classed among the most economically underprivileged groups. Unfortunately, Jean Harris identified with a privileged group when, in reality, without a job, without a home, without a man, just before she shot Tarnower, she was at the bottom of the heap. □

Lionel Abel

As Through a Glass, Darkly

I want to take up here two difficult and related matters, forced on the attention of some of us at the outset of the Second World War, matters which, from the spring of 1940, we found we would have to confront again and again. And since what was at issue during those years must still in some form or other remain before us, I shall try to go back and forth between the beginning of the Second World War—even to a few years before that—and the present time.

There were two problems those of us interested in politics found difficult to deal with—intellectually and morally. The first had to do with the use of force so as to prevent or to forestall the use of force against us by others; the second with the need we felt to support powers or policies we had in the past opposed, so as to act more effectively against other powers, other policies, to which, for reasons of principle, we had come to stand in even greater opposition. While separable, the two problems are of course related when understood at a certain depth, for both may require that because of the very strength of one's convictions, one break with some conviction by which one has hitherto been bound. And after such knowledge, what forgiveness?

I mean to speak to both these problems directly, but first of all I want to describe occasions when it seemed they could not be resolved. Recalling problem number one, I

am brought back to a circumstance I was caught in just before the war began, and which I can understand better now than I could while it was unfolding, which is not true in all such cases. There are events one understands fully when one is *dans le coup*, and to whose understanding reflection afterward can add very little. But the matter to which I am referring here, if it is to be understood at all by others at this point in time, requires a certain background of fact.

The year was 1938, it was March, and the third of the Moscow show trials was just about to take place. Bukharin and Rykov were about to stand in the prisoners' dock, even as had Radek, Pyatakov, Zinoviev, Kamenev before them, also other Bolshevik leaders, judged guilty in the first two trials. Moreover, the third trial was to be covered by Walter Duranty, whom the Trotskyists called the GPU journalist of the *New York Times*, and whom the Stalinists described as the one honest voice of the bourgeois press. He had reported the first two trials to be normal in appearance, orderly, and in thorough accordance with Soviet law. There was no indication from his account that the defendants, as he perceived them, had been unduly harassed—defendants, mind you, whom Khrushchev, in his 1956 speech against Stalin, claimed had been made to confess by the method of “Beat! Beat! Beat!” The confessions of the accused had made it hard to defend them, and it was also difficult to defend Leon Trotsky, charged by the Soviet court with having been their teacher and the main organizer of their “counterrevolutionary” deeds.

This is a chapter from a book Lionel Abel is just completing, entitled “The Intellectual Follies (1929-1979).”

American intellectuals, by now suspicious of Stalinist justice, had formed a committee that sent John Dewey with several other politically nonaligned intellectuals—mainly labor journalists—to Mexico to question Trotsky, so as to make some independent assessment of his guilt or innocence. This committee, which Sidney Hook organized after the first of the Moscow trials, immediately became the object of Stalinist vituperation and attack. Members of the committee were regularly awakened in the middle of the night by telephone calls demanding they give no further assistance to an enterprise that “hurts socialism and helps fascism.” Some were ordered to resign at once from the committee, and warned of further harassment if they did not. One member of the committee told me that his telephone rang every ten minutes from midnight until six in the morning for almost a week. I must say that at this sort of operation the Communists were expert. They certainly knew how to keep one awake all night.

For those who distrusted the Soviet courts, and who could not believe that Trotsky had conspired with Hitler, and who noted, too, that the judgment of the press was reflecting Stalinist opinion on the matter to an alarming degree, the time was a very difficult one. It became painful to read journals like the *New Republic* and the *Nation*, and, in view of Walter Duranty’s coverage of the trials, it became almost as painful to read the then respectably bourgeois *New York Times*. And there was another difficulty for Trotsky’s defenders. The English Stalinist lawyer Pritt pointed out that if one rejected the verdict of the Soviet court, one was not merely saying that the accused were innocent, but also that their accusers were guilty of a frameup. And among the accusers there was Comrade Stalin. Now to charge Stalin with frameup at that point in time, one had to have already made a pejorative judgment of the Soviet state, something few liberals had done or were prepared to do. It seemed almost impossible to declare Stalin guilty unless one had previously decided not merely on Trotsky’s innocence but also on the correctness of his

political position, a position held only by the Trotskyists. Thus it was very hard to argue with those who spoke or wrote against the accused. Finally, those of us who supported Trotsky did not know how to meet the argument that, after all, the defendants in the Moscow court had in fact confessed. And we all tried to think up brilliant explanations as to why they had confessed. But there was no explanation, however brilliant, as astonishing as the fact itself. Delmore Schwartz said to me one day, “I guess if there were no such thing as an objective world, the Stalinists would have their way. But I think there is such a world. If subjective idealism were correct, the Stalinists would be in the right, and we would be lost.” But was this metaphysical reasoning all we could count on? There were other supporters of Trotsky less interested in philosophy than Delmore, and more interested in action. And it is one of these supporters—I shall refer to him as S.—who was involved in the event to which I have referred.

S. was one of those remarkable people with culture, talent, and intelligence who have never been forced, by some special skill, by luck or by poverty, to make the choice of a profession. And so, in a period of political radicalism such as the ‘30s, he became a political radical; but I shall not call him a professional revolutionary; it would be much truer to say of him that he was a revolutionary without a profession. And if he hoped his political activity would some day become professional, in actual fact it never did. Associated with the Trotskyite group and yet very supercilious toward it, as well as toward all the other radical groups, extremely competent at all sorts of clandestine—how else shall I describe them?—operations, S. was an always interesting and resourceful personality on the extreme left, whom anyone with political problems that were difficult, dark or deep, liked to consult. I found him socially agreeable and always liked to see him. And I particularly enjoyed his air of secrecy when on occasion he dropped in on me, for I never knew exactly why he had come.

One day he rang me up. There was something urgent, and he could not tell me about it over the telephone. I would have to meet him outdoors, not in a public place, and it would have to be after dark. And he couldn't tell me in English, we would have to communicate in some other language. What language? "Not French," he said, "too many people understand it." I replied, "In some other foreign language, I won't understand you." After a pause he yielded, and said if we could meet in a place sufficiently deserted we might talk in the language of Shakespeare. Where did he suggest? The darkest and quietest street in the village, Greene Street just off West Broadway, a street too deserted to visit safely at night in the '50s, but in 1938 it seemed a safe place to divulge a secret. "Okay then," he said, "Greene Street it is, this evening, after nine," and paused. Then he said, "there to meet with Macbeth," and hung up.

I met him at about nine on Greene Street and he told me what was on his mind. He had been investigating a very interesting young woman, fluent in Russian, who was then being considered by the SWP as a secretary for Leon Trotsky. In fact the young woman, V., having passed every moral and technical test, and been judged politically reliable, was just on the point of leaving for Coyoacan to take up her duties in Trotsky's household. There was one difficulty about her. She had once visited the Soviet Union and tried to smuggle a Russian typewriter into the country; she had been detected, detained by the authorities, and then expelled. But if she was politically reliable, why did this matter? "Well," said S., "that's what I brought you here to tell you. But I wish we could talk either in Chinese or Malay, because this is something that is very dangerous to talk about in English."

S. looked about him, made sure that we were quite alone, and then told me these facts: V., just on the point of leaving for Mexico, had been telephoned by a ranking member of the Communist party, who had asked to interview her. Incidentally, the young woman had been personally close to some of the more important members of the Committee for the

Defense of Leon Trotsky. I suggested that the CP official might have called her in order to dissuade her from going to Mexico. "No," said S., "that's not it." And then he was silent. "Don't drag this out," I begged him.

Looking his most mysterious, he then told me something he expected me to know, but which I did not (I had missed the *New York Times* story): A Mr. and Mrs. Robinson—the husband, S. thought, was a Soviet agent, and, as it turned out, he was—who had gone to Russia from the West Coast in 1937, had been arrested by the Soviet authorities and were being detained. S. thought the Russians might very well try to use them as links between Trotsky and the defendants in the Third Moscow Trial. And then he said, "And if they say they know V., that would connect them with the members of the Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky." (The hypothesis was not absurd. "Robinson," as we know today, was Ewald, a Latvian Communist agent. He had been called back during the purge and had brought his wife, an American citizen, evidently placing his hope for safety in this American connection. When they were arrested, no less a personage than Alger Hiss, according to Allen Weinstein's *Perjury*, took it upon himself to inform the Soviet military intelligence that the United States would remain passive no matter what happened to the Robinsons.)

I said: "If they say they know V., she can deny it, she can give them the lie." "It is clear," he countered "that you don't understand the GPU. What if V. isn't here to deny what the Robinsons say? What if V. is kidnapped? They might take her in a barrel to Moscow." I said I didn't expect this to happen. "And if it should happen," S. came back at me, "you wouldn't know what to do." I: "I guess I wouldn't know what to do." He: "Oughtn't we to think of what we can do to keep something of that sort from happening?" We had been walking up and down the dark of Greene Street; here I stopped, faced him, and I think I raised my voice: "What are you talking about?" He: "I haven't said a thing. I've been thinking." I: "I hope you're not thinking what I think you're thinking. . . ."

He: "You're right about what you think I am thinking." I stared at him and I noticed that his face was white and drawn. I really felt quite sorry for S. at that moment, and also strangely exhilarated. I said to him: "As it happens, I have a great deal of affection for V. How do you feel about her?" He: "Oh, she's adorable, delightful. . . . If we didn't like her we'd have no right at all to think along the lines we've indicated. . . ." I shouted at him, "*We've indicated!* I haven't indicated anything! I haven't agreed to anything!"

Anyone who has never been associated with a movement for a cause he has judged to be great will perhaps not be able to understand this; he will perhaps also not be able to understand his own potential for crime. For the prospect of committing a crime to further a cause in which you deeply believe is a very exciting one. Here is a test not only of what you believe, but also of what you are. The very fact that we knew V. and had some liking for her, which made the suggestion of a crime against her all the more odious, also made the action contemplated seem the more important. I was very shaken, too, and finally I said to S., "I think you should discuss this with someone else." "With whom?" he wanted to know. And then I saw a way out. I said to him, "don't tell me I'm the only one you've talked to about this. I'll bet you've met someone else about this right here on Greene Street." As it turned out, he had.

I must note here for any reader who in the course of this narrative may have developed some concern for V. that she was neither kidnapped nor assassinated by S., and was at the last moment not accepted as a secretary for Leon Trotsky—her lack of skill with firearms was the reason for this; a secretary for Trotsky was also supposed to be a guard. I must add, too, that one of the secretaries taken in her stead to Mexico, Sheldon Hart, was kidnapped by the Siqueiros group in their unsuccessful attack on Trotsky's villa and killed by them.

The second problem we faced in those days had to do with the necessity to support powers and policies judged dangerous or evil, in

order to overcome powers or policies we judged to be still more dangerous, and more evil. The beginning of the Second World War, especially the victory of the Nazis in the Battle of France, presented this issue to us in the most drastic way. Many of my best friends simply would not face it honestly.

Those of us who had been at the extreme left of the radical movement found it particularly difficult to deal with a situation in which the only alternatives seemed victory for the Nazis and nazism, or support—and real support—for the British and American war machines. I was at the time quite unable to make this kind of choice. In the middle '30s, I remember arguing with a Communist against supporting LaGuardia for mayor of New York City. Now in fact there was no one else to vote for in that election, and it may be that LaGuardia was the best mayor New York City has ever had, or will have. Yet I argued with my Communist friend—he wasn't a friend, of course, being a Communist—except in the sense that he too wanted to argue about politics—in much these terms: I: "Do you mean to say you're going to vote for LaGuardia?" He: "I've done much worse things politically." For my part, I could hardly think of doing anything worse than voting for a man who turned out to be the best mayor New York City has ever had.

When Hitler's army broke through the French lines in April of 1940 I was living in Chicago. The defeat of the French army was just a stunning surprise. Our press had built up the impregnability of the Maginot Line and the strategic thinking of the French and British. Moreover, we thought of Germany as a country whose population was kept in line almost entirely by the police. I think it was not generally realized to what extent the mass of the German people supported Hitler. The only intimation that some outcome of the war was possible other than victory for France and England came from Leon Trotsky. In the winter of 1940, he published an article in *Liberty* magazine, in which he foresaw that in the spring of the year, the Danish, Dutch, Belgian, and even the French governments might be in London, in exile. Among the

reasons he gave for the possibility of a Nazi victory was the *disciplined* population of Germany. A disciplined population! I remember how surprised I was at the phrase. Disciplined! We had thought of the German people as harried, terrified, rebellious. Trotsky's was the only voice that spoke of them as *disciplined*.

Then, in April 1940 the Germans began their assault on the Western Front. My Chicago apartment was above one occupied by a German workman—I should say a skilled worker, though I never found out or tried to find out just what trade he was in—and I met him frequently in the hall as I was going up to my flat. He spoke English with a heavy German accent and I assumed he had emigrated from Germany out of distaste for the Hitler government. How wrong I was about this I only knew after the Nazi breakthrough, for after that the sounds of *Deutschland über Alles* and of the *Horst Wessel Song* broke through into my own apartment and occupied it even as the Nazis were marching on Paris. If I was depressed by the victory of Hitler, my working-class German neighbor evidently was not. The next time I met him in the hallway he said to me: "You know I killed many Frenchmen in the First World War." "A lot of Germans are going to be killed in this war," I said in reply. "And who's going to kill them?" he asked sarcastically, "the dead Polacks? Or the Frenchmen we've taken prisoner? Are those people you're counting on?" I wanted to say—sometimes what you *want* to say seems very important—"We will, we, the Americans." But I couldn't say this, for at that time I was still committed to the Trotskyist view that under no circumstances should one support a capitalist government, even against Hitler. I was suspicious by then of the Trotskyist political line, but I was not yet ready to discard it.

On the University of Chicago campus I knew two persons who thought the Trotskyist political line on the war ridiculous and said so openly. One was Nathan Leites, who after the war assisted Harold Lasswell in Freudianizing American political theory, and the other was Edward Shils, the sociologist, then at the

outset of his career. We used to walk up and down the Midway, arguing about the war, and the question I tried to answer could be formulated thus: Was there any help against Hitler except by way of Washington?

But I wanted to know more directly what people of my general persuasion were saying in New York, and I made a trip there just to find out. In those days, by the way, train travel from Chicago to New York was very pleasurable. You had drinks in the parlor car, played cards, enjoyed the time, and looked at your watch much less often than you do on an airplane run nowadays. But this particular trip I took was not for pleasure, but to find some expression of political authority, and I thought I might find it in New York. As I got into the train, I heard the Chicago newsboys shouting: "Hitler pitching! Petain catching!"

At the outset of hostilities, Trotsky had described the conflict as a continuation or prolongation of World War I. His judgment on this matter was backed by both factions of the Trotskyist movement, which had split into Schachtmanite and Cannonite wings. (There are still some Trotskyists and ex-Trotskyists who to this day see nothing wrong with this judgment of the war, and have criticisms mainly for those in their ranks who did not continue to hold it.) But I found when I got to New York City that at *Partisan Review*, Philip Rahv, who had been politically influenced by Trotsky even as I had, thought this particular judgment of the Bolshevik leader absurd. He related it to what he called the "lollipop" theory of revolution, putting his criticism thus: "The Trotskyists think that if they don't support this war, the workers, when it is over—but who knows when it will be over if the United States won't enter it, or who may be the winner of it—will realize that the Trotskyists did the right thing in opposing the war, and will give them the power as a reward, like a lollipop." He also accused the Trotskyists of counting on the capitalists to deal with Hitler while they themselves preserved their revolutionary purity by writing articles attacking all capitalist governments.

After some talk with Rahv, I went directly

to the offices of the Cannonite Trotskyists at Thirteenth Street and University Place. And I asked those in the office, most of whom I knew quite well, what their program was for France in view of Hitler's military success.

I must say they seemed to me a cheery lot at that moment of catastrophe. They did not even admit to seeing a real problem. "We have the same program," they said, "as we had before Hitler broke through. And you know what that program is. You know it as well as we do." I recall saying in reply, "Just state it for me, please. I don't think I know it *quite* as well as you do." "For one thing," they said, "we would like to start some mutinies in the French army." I showed my surprise. But why? Wasn't Hitler the problem? The answer came: "He is a problem the French army has been unable to deal with." "And you think," I said, "that mutinies in the French army will terrify Hitler?" "Not at first," they granted, "but if these mutinies spread, he might have to face mutiny in his own ranks." "Are you," I asked, "also in favor of mutinies in the British navy?" "Of course," they said, "we are just as much against the British Empire as we are against Hitler." And looking at me suspiciously someone said, "Maybe, like the liberals, you prefer England to Hitler." I replied with some vigor, "Yes, I prefer England to Hitler. Also, France, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Belgium, Holland, and the United States! I prefer all of them to Hitler." With some alarm they said, "Read our inter-party documents," and they gave me some.

The justification for using force was made (indirectly to be sure) by Charles Saunders Pierce when he pointed out that there is more than one way of fixing a belief, one way being to hold perseveringly to whatever belief one has already held. Tenacity is a means, and a means often successfully relied on to arrive at satisfactory opinions. From which it can be seen why force often has to be employed. For if one's opponent thought he was wrong, or if he were not tenacious in thinking himself right, he might not call upon force, and one would not have to call upon force to defeat him. What Pierce's view maintains is that no one is finally wrong until he is defeated, and

from this it follows that it is often only in battle that there can be adjudication of the right and of the wrong. If we did not fight against Hitler, we would be allowing him not only merely to assert and to strengthen, but to give at the very least a *kind of proof* that his views were right. And that is why he had to be fought with whatever weapons there were at hand and alongside whoever was prepared to fight against him.

But to support a war such as the United States and its allies were to wage meant giving one's support to the very ideological positions most of the intellectuals I knew had always opposed: capitalism, militarism, nationalism. Could one support such positions and yet continue to make the criticisms of them one had previously made? One had to learn to think all over again, and this some of our best intellectuals refused to do.

Clement Greenberg and Dwight MacDonald even argued in *Partisan Review* that to defeat the Nazis we would have to become like them, and in many important respects. And this was the position taken by Leon Trotsky, though in fairness to him it must be said that he had only seen the beginnings of the war, whose nature he so misunderstood, and might have changed his view of it had he lived beyond August 1940, when he was assassinated. Trotsky had declared in the *Militant* that the democracies allied against Hitler would have to be supported, if in fact it was possible for them to defeat him. Trotsky did not believe that the democratic powers could defeat Hitler, and this was one of the main justifications he gave to his followers for not supporting the war effort of the United States. On this point, Trotsky, like the intellectuals he influenced, was certainly in error. Hitler was in fact defeated, and the states that won out against him are today more democratic in their structure than when they entered the war against him. One has only to think of the vast changes in the British Empire, now a commonwealth, and in the United States. In addition, there has been at least a certain trend toward democratization within the Soviet Union.

But once again, what was wrong with

- Trotsky's view of the war? It came down to this: There was no way to defeat the Nazis other than by armed struggle, which enabled the democracies to use the weapons of fraud and mass violence, which the Nazis hoped to monopolize, and which, without going to war, the democracies could not have called upon. War made the peoples of the democratic nations militaristic enough and efficient enough to defeat the Nazis, but yet politically distinguishable from the Nazis in their support for free institutions. Yet, to make war in 1941, if one was a socialist, one had to learn to think darkly.

After the war, too, many of these questions remained unresolved. Hitlerism had been defeated, but the Communists, with whom we had been allied, were, with the aid of the Soviet armies, coming to power in the states of Eastern Europe. We had the atomic bomb and the Soviet Union did not, and some intellectuals, like Bertrand Russell, even advocated the use of the bomb against Russia. Others advocated a declaration of war against the Soviets unless they relinquished their military hold on Eastern Europe. I was even told at the time by an Italian newspaperman, enlisted in the American army, who had been with the first American division to contact the Russian forces along the Elbe, that if the American government then had insisted on Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe, Stalin would have yielded at once. Of course, this was just a presumption, and there is no way of testing whether or not it was true. In any case, the Communists came to power in the European countries through which the Red Army passed and where it remained. And then Americans became aware of Communist penetration of the unions, schools, the press, Hollywood, and even the armed forces.

In line with these discoveries was another we made (also in 1947) when we read Jean-Paul Sartre's essay *Portrait of the Anti-Semite*. The effect of the essay was quite sensational; I think it was more talked about than any other intellectual effort of that period. Edmund Wilson even compared Sar-

tre, on the strength of the essay, to Voltaire, but his judgment here is wide of the mark, for in many ways the attitude of the new French writer, as will be seen, was quite the opposite of Voltaire's.* What Sartre had to say about the anti-Semite was very simply that he was a murderer and not someone with a set of opinions that could be discussed and argued about, analyzed as true or false. Now in one respect Sartre was certainly correct. Anti-Semitism, at least since the First World War, has been connected with mass murder.

But, on the other hand, Sartre was not writing just about anti-Semitism in the 20th century, but about anti-Semitism as such. And in other historical periods, men noted for their anti-Semitism could hardly be called murderers. Dostoevsky was anti-Semitic; was he a murderer? Belloc and G. K. Chesterton had been anti-Semites; could they have been called murderers? And there was another difficulty. If you call the anti-Semite a murderer, are you not asking for his execution? Or asking, at least, that he be sentenced to prison for life? And can one be punished in such drastic ways merely for expressing views? But such views, said Sartre, indicate the nature of the anti-Semite's project, which is, in fact, murder. When I was introduced to Sartre I had just read his essay, and I asked him, "Aren't you advocating the murder of anti-Semites?" He did give me an answer. All I can recall of it now is that it was very complicated and did not satisfy me. I wrote an essay against Sartre's essay for Dwight Macdonald's *Politics*. And as I recall, too, Harold Rosenberg wrote something against it in *Commentary*.

But the point that Sartre made in his essay remains with us as a problem to be considered after all the arguments and all the polemics: Suppose someone asserts that it is right to kill members of a certain group and holds tenaciously to this opinion, argues for it, tries to spread it, will not admit himself mistaken in holding it? Fundamentally, what can you do against such a person except put an end to his

*But let me spell it out: Voltaire was anti-Semitic, and in favor of tolerance; Sartre was pro-Semitic, and favored intolerance toward anti-Semites.

social existence by death or imprisonment? In other words, the tenacity of your antiliberal opponent forces a certain degree of antiliberalism on you. To act, whatever your commitment to clarity, you may have to begin to think *darkly*.

When the Communists seized the government of Czechoslovakia, murdering in the process Thomas Masaryk, the son of that republic's founding father (they said he had committed suicide—but their story is not supported by any fact, and is quite unbelievable), and when with this development in Eastern Europe it was revealed that Karl Fuchs had transferred knowledge he had obtained in working on the atom bomb project to the Russians, the stage was set for the entrance onto the national political scene of Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin.

Even today it is difficult to write with full objectivity of Senator McCarthy. The emotions his career excited, the passions he himself deliberately inflamed in his often talented anti-Communist orations, his tactic of sully-ing by accusation, and when necessary (to his purpose) by slander, have made of the senator a figure toward whom one can hardly take a neutral stance. But, on the other hand, it is simply not the case, as some liberals have claimed in their recollections of the period, that there was no justification whatever for the positions Senator McCarthy took, for instance his claim that there was Communist influence in many areas of American life. If one judges—as do I—that McCarthy was a political opportunist without deep conviction of any kind, then surely he must have been presented with a historic occasion especially suited for exploiting the particular convictions he claimed to hold. He could not have been as unnecessary to the American political process as some of his opponents claim he was, or, I submit, he would not have had even the limited success he enjoyed for the period when his power was felt in the State Department, in Congress, in Hollywood, in the universities, and finally in the Army, which did not fail to retaliate, and in a way fatal to McCarthy's aims.

Something had to be done about the Communists, nationally as well as internationally. Now giving power to Senator McCarthy was not, of course, the right way of countering Communist influence. But the weak point of some liberal attacks on McCarthy was the claim that there was no problem, that he was the problem in fact, and not communism, in those areas of American life where it had become strong. The liberals were quite right if one concentrated entirely, as some did, on the havoc McCarthy was causing in the school system and among our career diplomats. And we must consider, too, that internationally the Soviet Union was far weaker in that period than it is today, also that the United States, before Vietnam and Watergate, was much stronger than it is now. So everything considered, the argument of the liberals was a strong one, and it finally prevailed with the top brass of the Republican party, which staged the Senate hearings on the McCarthy Committee, and destroyed the senator's power from then on.

But there can be no doubt, for this observer at least, that the appearance of McCarthy on the scene and the growth of his power were properly read by the Soviet leaders as warnings of what they might expect if the split between Russia and the U.S. deepened. Moreover, someone had to warn a rather complacent America of that period about the penetration of the Communists into American institutions. Unfortunately the only one entirely willing to take on himself the task was Senator Joseph McCarthy. One can only say here, "The offense must come!" and also, "Woe to him through whom the offense cometh!"

Curiously enough, during those days the ones who defended Senator McCarthy, at least in private conversations, were often former radicals, ex-Stalinists or Trotskyists. Some would say, "So he wants power. What's wrong with that? Doesn't Eisenhower want power?" This was from an ex-Stalinist, who had supported arguments equally as bad for the Moscow trials. But I found to my surprise that friends who had been or were hoping to remain Trotskyists in their general outlook

found some virtue in the Senator. During the early days of the McCarthy Committee hearings, they pointed to the fact that McCarthy was making a fool of Senator Stuart Symington, and that Roy Cohn had successfully replied to Welch's interrogations, which the press at that time even called "brutal." One ex-Trotskyist said to me: "The world the liberals are defending is gone forever and Senator McCarthy knows it. The liberals don't."

What disturbed many left-wingers and also liberals about Senator McCarthy's tactics was his evident disregard for accuracy to fact in making his wholesale accusations. He was quite willing to make the most drastic charges on the basis of the most ambiguous evidence. Whatever the political objectives of the senator, such tactics could hardly be endorsed morally, and they often led to the severest consequences: blighted careers and ruined lives. On the other hand, there is this incontestable fact: many of those who objected to Senator McCarthy's actions saw nothing objectionable in such tactics when pursued by the left.

For example, Jean-Paul Sartre, who pilloried the United States for yielding to McCarthyism, saw nothing objectionable in the charge made by the Communists in 1952 that the United States was guilty of using germ warfare in Korea: admitting that the charge was unsupported by any kind of evidence, Sartre nonetheless reproached French workmen for not having supported Communist demonstrations at which the charge was made. To be sure, there is a difference between slandering individuals and slandering a great national state, which can hardly be destroyed by false charges. All the same, the willingness to back slogans one knows to be false is hardly better, morally speaking, than the making of accusations against persons without regard for their truth.

The comparison I am making here between Senator Joseph McCarthy and Jean-Paul Sartre is justified, I think, by other (and comparable policies) they followed. The policy advocated by the senator toward Communists and those suspected of communism

was not so unlike that advocated by Sartre toward the anti-Semites. Sartre had asserted in his essay that we *should not* think clearly about the anti-Semite. If we tried to understand him, we might forgive him, and we should not forgive him, for he, said Sartre, is a murderer. And the senator from Wisconsin was asking: How could we deal with such unprincipled opponents as the Communists if we ourselves insisted on being principled? Now this was very like the question raised by radicals during the war: How could we defeat Hitler without becoming like the Hitlerites?

Did we in fact become like the Hitlerites in defeating Hitler? The prediction that we would become like them made at the outset of the war by groups and individuals who thought their interest served in opposing it was, however, scarcely noted as proved or disproved once the war was over—or at least not in the years immediately following it. But by the '60s, when the moral judgments made during and directly after the war, having lost much of their urgency, lost some of their force, actions of the United States and its allies during the war became again subject to criticism. And at this time it became possible to compare the bombings of Germany, as well as the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings of Japan, with the mass violence of the Nazis, even with their organization of murder camps.

During the '60s Hannah Arendt published *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, a review of the trial of Adolf Eichmann, which gave rise to a spirited and at times furious controversy in which I myself participated. But I do not want here to go again over the arguments that were hurled between those who disagreed about the meaning and validity of Miss Arendt's discussion of Eichmann. What concerns me here is only one of her ideas, but it is the idea she herself singled out as the main contribution of her book, the idea of the "banality of evil." This idea is supposed to describe a process for which no particular social group in modern times is responsible, and by means of which actions that in past

times would have been considered unusual for their malignant intent are converted into the most banal happenings.

According to Miss Arendt, modern civilization has set in motion forces that regularly transform the unusually evil into the regularity of the humdrum, so that the evil as such is often not even remarked. Now according to this view of modern times, it was not at all necessary for the Nazi leaders to have been especially morbid or malignant in their political goals for them to have set up the murder camps that so scandalized the West. And if Miss Arendt did not herself point up the British bombings of Dresden and Leipzig, the American bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as operations morally equivalent to the setting up of human crematoria, many of her supporters did.

I do not believe that it is right, or can ever be right, to regard evil as "banal," no matter what processes are at work in society, for I do not think we can properly designate anything as *evil* unless we can point to an *intent* to do evil: An earthquake that took as many lives as went up in the smoke coming from the Nazi crematoria would not make us morally indignant, or cause us to indict the earth. The Nazi violence against the races they described as inferior was preached before the war began, and carried out during it. The American bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, however frightful in their effects, had, after all, the purpose of bringing the slaughter to an end. We did not desire the death of a single Japanese victim of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings; the Nazis, on the other hand, clearly desired the deaths of all those dispatched in their annihilation camps, and of many more besides. So our actions and the acts of the Nazis, even when equally violent, have to be distinguished morally. I say *have* to be distinguished, but many do not feel the necessity of this, as can be seen from Marcel Ophuls's latest film *Memory of Justice*, which I want to discuss in some detail.

Ophuls's *Memory of Justice* occasioned much controversy when it was first shown and is now being presented for special per-

formances, sometimes for a single evening, in various theaters around the country. On April 23, 1977, I went to Philadelphia to see the film, which was being given a single showing at the Walnut Street Theatre. The film began at three o'clock and there was a dinner break at six. At seven, the showing was resumed and went on until about nine-thirty or ten, after which Marcel Ophuls and Susan Sontag appeared on the stage and answered questions from the audience.

Ophuls's film has many faults, some of which were properly pointed up by Harold Rosenberg in the *New York Review of Books* and by Dorothy Rabinowitz in *Commentary*. In fact, their criticism was for the most part repeated by Susan Sontag from the platform of the Walnut Street Theatre, and Marcel Ophuls, seated next to Miss Sontag, was not able to meet the critique as formulated by her. What Harold Rosenberg had said violently Miss Sontag repeated sweetly, and what Miss Rabinowitz had said angrily Miss Sontag stated as if motivated by the most earnest friendship, and thus Marcel Ophuls was not able to call upon the anger that had served him rather well in replying to Harold Rosenberg in the *New York Review of Books*. The main criticism of Rosenberg, Rabinowitz, and Sontag was this: The introduction of film shots of the aerial bombardments by the American air force in Vietnam, of the bombing of Dresden by the British, and of the atom bomb exploding over Hiroshima tended to give the impression that the enemies of Hitler had committed crimes like his. Ophuls, of course, denied that he had intended to give any such impression. The bombings of Dresden and of Hiroshima, he said, were war crimes rather than crimes against humanity. However, *Memory of Justice* does not make this distinction clearly, and we do have the impression at the film's end that the court at Nuremberg represented powers guilty of crimes like those the court was called upon to judge.

In fact the film is a trial of the judges and prosecutors at Nuremberg, rather than of those who were found guilty there. Thus I cannot accept Marcel Ophuls's statement—he made it from the platform in Phila-

delphia—that he was *for* the assizes at Nuremberg and *in favor* of the judgment rendered there. If the film is, indeed, as I claim it is, a trial of the judges and of the judgment they rendered, then how can it be a statement in favor of their judgment? We do not require of a question profoundly put that it be an answer too, but only that what it asks be asked probingly and fundamentally. Certainly one should not require of a film such as *Memory of Justice* that it make a statement in favor of the Nuremberg decisions. Any artistic treatment of the event is entitled to question that decision. The real issue, then, is whether Marcel Ophuls's film is sufficiently insightful in its questioning of the decision reached at Nuremberg.

I am not sure how responsible the filmmaker, Ophuls, is for the fact that if there is a hero in *Memory of Justice*, that hero is undoubtedly one of the accused Nazis, Air Marshal Göring. Compared with him, the American prosecutor, Robert Jackson, cuts the figure of a rather dull, self-righteous, not-too-bright American, whereas the Nazi air marshal is subtle, unexpectedly candid, Mephistophelean, disturbing, and profound. There is another American important in this film and associated with the prosecution as an assistant, General Telford Taylor. He is certainly more sympathetic than Robert Jackson, and he does not seem unintelligent. But his way of expressing himself is even more likely to induce a distrust of Americans, and in fact of what might be called the American spirit, than the heavy-handed moralism and downright stupidity of Jackson. For in Telford Taylor one sees the inconsequentiality of intelligence, and this is what Europeans are prone to see even in intelligent Americans, whom they think of as not being concerned to follow where their intelligence would lead them if they allowed it to. In any case, General Telford Taylor strikes one as inadequate to the Nuremberg Trials and it is on him that the camera is most often fixed.

One of the very striking revelations of the film, and perhaps it is a revelation that only the film medium could make this powerfully,

for on the screen we see the faces of the principals themselves, is the genuine astonishment of some of the Nazi leaders at the evidence of the concentration camp horrors they all certainly knew about, and each in his own way had a certain responsibility for. At times one could see that they were appalled at the sickening details of what was in fact their own agreed-upon program toward resisters to Hitler and most especially toward the Jews. The explanation for this peculiar fact is perhaps best made by Simone Weil, who died during the war, before the Allied victory and the setting-up of the Nuremberg tribunal. Now Simone Weil, whom Conor Cruise O'Brien in the *New York Review of Books* has called nonpolitical, was one of the few intellectuals in the prewar period who showed some depth in assessing the stature of Hitler. In fact I would say she was one of the few intellectuals who wrote as an intellectual about Hitler, and not as a partisan. She was not interested in calling him names, but in understanding him. And one of the things she said about him was this: "He strikes directly at the imagination." There is no doubt that this is true, but she is also right in noting that adversaries of Hitler who tried to imitate him in this respect were never able to do so successfully. But let us go back now to the Nazi leadership in the courtroom at Nuremberg as they are confronted with the filming of concentration camp atrocities. As they watch these films, we see them aided only by their own devices of imagination, reflection, and justification. Hitler is dead, and he can no longer strike their imagination with the goals he had proclaimed, as he had done in life. Hitler was the reason they had not seen, and could not have seen, the concentration camp details with the horror they have for us. Hitler was not in the courtroom at Nuremberg to astonish them as he had while he lived. What did astonish them now was what they themselves, under his command, had done.

Now in response to questions from the audience, Marcel Ophuls remarked that while Nazi officials could be charged with guilt for inhuman actions—assuming of course that

such charges were proved—and he could support charges of guilt against Nazis as individuals, he was against any charge of collective responsibility for acts during the war that can only be described as mass executions and mass murders. Now, can mass executions, mass murders, be properly attributed to individuals? It is hard to see how. Only a collectivity can organize collective murder.

When one considers further that one of the main charges at Nuremberg was the charge of crimes against humanity, the attribution of guilt for this to individuals becomes even more difficult and complicated. Can a single individual commit a crime against humanity? No doubt the possibility that this may happen exists. I have heard at least one person say, though I doubt that it was seriously meant, that he was ready to throw the bomb which would destroy the race. Equipped with a doomsday instrument, a single individual, alienated from his fellows, could no doubt destroy them and himself, and certainly this would be a crime against humanity, though if successful there would be no one left to describe it in those terms. But without such a lethal instrument, how could a single—individual—act be described as a crime against humanity? The brutality of concentration camp officials, even of the murder-camp experts, was directed against those they were assigned to torture or kill. Criminals though they certainly were, they can hardly be called criminals against humanity.

Once again, what is a crime against humanity? At Nuremberg it was decided that genocide, the attempted extermination of some human collectivity—the Jews and the Gypsies were marked for extermination by the Nazis—is a crime against humanity. Note that the number of persons killed or whose death was projected is not a factor here. What counts is the aim of utterly wiping out an entire group of humans. I suppose what we have here is a recognition of the biblical idea represented in the story of Noah, that every animal specie found on the earth has to be preserved. Thus we are told that Noah took

two of each specie, male and female, with him into the ark. And in fact even to this day, anyone who destroys the last member of a still-existing specie is subject to punishment. An American hunter who killed the last remaining buffalo would be punished as an enemy of nature, though for this crime no one yet has devised a satisfactory penalty.

No doubt the Russian Communists under Stalin killed many more persons than did the Hitlerites. Did they also commit crimes against humanity? But they never announced it as their intention to extirpate entire collectivities of human beings. So then an act aiming at genocide is a crime against humanity, no matter how many or how few the actual victims. Now I take it that genocide can hardly be an individual aim. It is an ideological aim, and there has to be a collective responsibility rather than individual guilt for the carrying out of such an aim. If this responsibility does not extend to the whole German nation, and I would agree with Marcel Ophuls that it does not, if responsibility for genocide does not extend to every single member of the Nazi party, and I would accept this judgment too, though I am less sure of it than of the qualification I have already made—yet certainly this responsibility covers the entire leadership of the Nazi party, which accepted Hitler's program for extirpating whole peoples, most specifically the Gypsies and the Jews.

Here again, I find some of Simone Weil's ideas illuminating. I quote from Simone de Petremont's *Simone Weil, A Life*:

A new book by Bernanos, *Les Grands Cimetieres sous la lune*, had just been published. It dealt with the Spanish Civil War, which was still going on. Bernanos, who had lived in Majorca, had seen what had happened on the Franco side of the war. A Catholic writer, a royalist, an admirer of the reactionary Drumont, he should have been sympathetic to the revolt of the Spanish generals against a republican government. But he had been appalled by the regime of terror that the fascists had established in Majorca, and the great number of senseless executions that had taken place on that island, where nothing could justify such

severe measures. In his book he denounced this mad intoxication with death.

Simone felt impelled to write to him about the analogous experience she had had on the opposite side. In this letter she describes some of the events she had seen or heard of when she was in Spain. These events, though they never reached the utter ignominy described by Bernanos, suffice to show, she says, that a certain atmosphere reigned equally in the two camps. Bernanos thought that fear had caused all these useless cruelties.

Simone says: "Yes, it is true that fear played some part in all this butchery; but where I was, it did not appear to play the large part you assign to it. Men who seem to be brave—there was one at least whose courage I personally witnessed—would retail with cheery fraternal chuckles at convivial mealtimes how many priests they had murdered, or how many 'fascists,' the latter being a very elastic term. My own feeling was that when once a certain class of people has been placed by the temporal and spiritual authorities outside the ranks of those whose life has value, then nothing comes more naturally to men than to kill. As soon as men know that they can kill without fear of punishment or blame, they kill; or at least they encourage the killer with approving smiles. . . . The very purpose of the whole struggle is soon lost in an atmosphere of this sort. For the purpose can only be defined in terms of the public good, of the welfare of men—and men have become valueless. . . ."

Simone Weil's observations here surely make clear just what it was that the Nazis did that could be called a crime against humanity. They had created an atmosphere in which whole collectivities became valueless and were consequently killable. But surely they accomplished this not as individuals, but as Nazis, as supporters of an ideology that justified, precisely, the exclusion of certain collectivities from valuation as human beings. Can one say the same for the antifascists in the Aragon militia with which Simone Weil found herself in the Spanish Civil War? Here the answer has to be qualified. Whatever the behavior of the antifascist militiamen—and I would accept Simone Weil's description as accurate—they had not consciously formulated a set of ideological notions with the

express aim of rendering whole groups of persons, whole collectivities even, valueless so that they could be killed. And I think not even the Stalinists did this. But the Nazis did. This was in fact their crime, and this crime is hardly even alluded to in any direct way during the five or six hours of Marcel Ophüls's film. We meet some of the master criminals and we see exhibits of their cruelty, but we are never informed in moral-political terms of what it is they did.

I have considered *Memory of Justice* in so much detail because it expressed, with the vividness and force of modern film technique, some of the ways by which the political actions of the democracies during the Second World War can be shown to jibe with, rather than differ from, those of the Axis powers. Typical of this film, as of other efforts to involve the Western democracies in the evils they claimed to be combating, is the method of admitting differences between the democracies and the Axis, and then denying such differences by emphasizing similarities.

One can barely consider going to war in modern times without accepting the necessity to do many evil things, and after a war is concluded, it is always possible for a list to be made of all the wrongdoings of those who justified it. But these lists of errors, evils, mistakes, and vile actions that the presses continue to bring forth hardly help us to resolve the difficulty of the problem I mentioned at the start, or suggest any way of dealing with it: What general criteria are there for justifying force and especially "force to the uttermost," for that is what one must exert in modern war.

Serious consideration of the circumstances under which the use of force may be justified has been the subject of much thinking, but I myself know nothing better on the subject than an essay by the German literary critic Walter Benjamin: "Toward a Critique of Violence," in which the critic shows both sophistication and depth in treating one of the great questions of our time.

In his essay, Benjamin points out that there are two ways of judging violence; it may be

looked at from the standpoint of *natural law* and also from the standpoint of *positive law*. He writes:

If natural law can only judge each existing right by the criticism of its goals, then positive law can only judge a right in the process of establishing itself by the criticism of its means. If justice is a criterion of goals aimed at, conformity to law is a criterion of means employed. Natural right tries to justify means by the justice of the goals aimed at; positive law tries to guarantee the justice of the goals aimed at by the legitimacy of the means employed.

What if there is a contradiction—there often is—between the means that natural rights regard as legitimate, in view of the goal aimed at, and the rejection of these means by positive law, insofar as they are violent? In such cases, how is the matter to be judged? Here Benjamin holds that “. . . one must find a point of view external to the philosophy of positive law, and also external to that of natural right. . . .” He suggests that only the philosophy of history can supply such a criterion.

Perhaps philosophy of history can supply a criterion, but it will not be a clear criterion. It will prove in many instances a “dark” concept, like the one I suggested Jean-Paul Sartre was relying on when he described the anti-Semite as a “murderer.” I say it is a dark concept, because philosophy of history requires us to claim a knowledge of the future that in fact we do not have. We can predict, we can prophesy, we can guess what the future will bring out of the darkness. But it is from the darkness that the future comes. How little this criterion can serve becomes apparent when we consider the attitude of the Trotskyists to the Second World War, in which they refused to participate on the side of the nations united against the Axis powers. This refusal was termed, after the war was over, “mad,” by one of their own leaders, Max Schachtman. But how is it that he, certainly sensible and very well informed, could support a policy on such an important matter, which after the war he himself would designate as mad? How could this have happened?

Let us look at the Trotskyist program at the outset of the war, as it related to the values of natural right and to positive law. I must say neither value was especially honored by the Trotskyists. Positive law could be denied where it went counter to the interests, as understood by the Trotskyists, of the proletariat; natural right they often regarded as a bourgeois shibboleth insofar as they had accepted Trotsky’s *In Defense of Terrorism*, which justified even the shooting of hostages. The one value they called upon in denouncing the support of the Allied war effort by liberals they derived precisely from their philosophy of history, which, it can be seen now, clearly had misinformed them about what the results of the war would be.

Having rejected the more or less clear concepts by which violent actions may be judged, they relied entirely on a “dark” concept with the results we know. On the other hand, insane though their policy may have been, they had no alternative but to persevere in it, for the ideology they held required them to place the deliverances of the philosophy of history far above those of natural right and of positive law. They were in a position in which it was just as reasonable to follow an insane policy as it was for others outside their movement to urge them to break with it.

Can we come to any definite conclusion after these varied recollections and observations? Is there any definite conclusion we can state about force and the use of force? I would hold to the notions Benjamin has advanced. There are occasions when in the name of natural right it will be right to use force in unexpected ways and even against existing law. On the other hand, Benjamin insisted, any such use of force in the denial of existing law can only be defended if it *aims at founding some new law*. What about such matters as the taking and killing of hostages, supported by Trotsky in his *Defense of Terrorism*? Such actions are purely nihilistic or utilitarian and cannot be defended, and the work in which Trotsky tried to defend them is the very poorest of his writings. One can only defend such actions by relying entirely on

what I have called “dark” concepts, and while concepts of that sort cannot be totally excluded, it is certainly best not to rest one’s whole case on them when one is about to commit a violent deed or to urge it on others, or when one refuses to participate in acts of violence that the rest of society finds neces-

sary. Witness the fate of the Trotskyist movement after World War II. Perhaps they would not have been so trusting of the “dark” concepts embodied in their philosophy of history if they had had a little more respect for natural rights and the existing laws they so often dismissed as bourgeois illusions.

Postscript

In referring to “dark concepts” and to “thinking darkly” I have not always had the same thing in mind. Also, the reader may ask, “Can one think clearly about ‘thinking darkly’?” Let me try to respond here on both these points.

When I referred to the need of socialists and leftists during the war to think “darkly,” I had in mind their need to think outside of, or even against, some of the concepts to which they were committed. And when I said that Sartre was urging us to think “darkly” about the anti-Semite, I had in mind the kind of acceptance of blindness advocated by Hans-Georg Gadamer, who warned us not to be prejudiced against our prejudices. This notion of Gadamer’s, which was not without influence on the Frankfurt Marxists, can surely be described as an acceptance of the need at times to “think darkly.” And, finally, when I referred to the Trotskyists’ “dark concepts” of history, I meant still another kind of criticism, the critique of what is clear by what is dim or vague, for in this case, the “dark concepts” they relied on came *from* their system and did not lie outside it.

And one last point in this connection about the “banality of evil.” Is this notion, which it appears that many intellectuals and writers find so attractive, still another instance of “dark thinking”? It is difficult, of course, to distinguish “dark thinking” from bad thinking or even nonthinking, but I shall try to make this distinction as clearly as I can.

First of all, what can those who refer to the “banality of evil” mean by “evil”? Can they mean what rationalists, such as Leibnitz,

meant by “evil”—that which is less valuable or valid than something else, which happens to be equally possible? If this is, indeed, what they mean by evil, then there is surely nothing alarming, surprising, or in any way objectionable about the notion of the “banality of evil.” For evil, taken in this sense, has already been thoroughly banalized, being something not necessarily abhorrent, but something to which some other thing can reasonably be preferred. However, I do not think that those who have used the term “banality of evil” are referring to evil as so understood. I think they have in mind what Kant meant by evil—radical evil, evil as such. And of course, if radical evil, evil as such, could indeed be banalized, there would certainly be something astonishing about the process, something to justify a great deal of intellectual commotion.

Unfortunately for those who have employed the term, and fortunately for humanity, *radical evil can never be banalized*, for if this could happen, that which was evil would cease to be radical; evil cannot both blend with the rest of the moral landscape and also stand out as completely separate from it. I think that those who have used the term “banality of evil” have an intuitive sense of its unintelligibility, and the fact that they cannot understand this concept may be precisely what makes it so attractive to them.

Surely a concept that is self-refuting should be distinguished from “thinking darkly” and “dark concepts,” even as not seeing anything at all should be distinguished from looking at something, if only through a glass, darkly. □

Deborah Meier

Why Reading Tests Don't Test Reading

Hard-headed realists tell us, much as we may wish otherwise, standardized tests prove that millions of America's schoolchildren (approximately half) are failing to learn even the basic educational skills. Despite all the efforts of the Great Society (Head Start, Titles I-IV) to educate disadvantaged children, they are still as far behind as ever. The hard data—standardized test scores—suggest that the goals themselves were impossible and the efforts to achieve them even harmful.

Standardized tests, then, are central to the current attack on the idea of democratic schooling. For all their seeming scientific sophistication and objectivity, such tests are based on a set of unexamined value judgments and social biases. As long as we rely on such tools to tell us what our children can and cannot do, we will indeed have to concede the argument to the pessimists: ordinary people cannot be taught the cognitive skills necessary for making complex decisions. In short, democracy becomes impossible.

To make matters worse, acceptance of this pessimism leads school systems to adopt ever narrower and more trivial educational objectives and these, whether or not they are met, leave most children unprepared to make important decisions. In this vicious cycle, even the optimists get caught. That is why the nature of testing, and the quality of this "hard data," cannot be left to the psychometricians. It is a matter of large social concern.

An Autobiographical Account

I GREW INTERESTED IN TESTS rather slowly and reluctantly. Having been a good "testee," I

tended to accept tests smugly. And having a general aversion to conspiracy theories, I was offended at the notion that such expertly put-together instruments could be seriously flawed. In fact, during the 1960s in Chicago, I supported an effort to sneak test results out of that city's Board of Education in order to demonstrate publicly the inferiority of the education offered to the black community—by exposing their poor test scores. We were right about discrimination, but we were wrong in thinking the tests were a useful tool for documenting the failure of our schools. It's painful today to see the very same testing patterns used to demonstrate the pointlessness of providing additional funds for these same neighborhood schools. The trouble was that we didn't look carefully at the tests, the way children handled them, the assumptions that lay beneath their development, or the manner in which scores were derived.

The first time I bothered to look at a test with any critical scrutiny was only when my own son did badly on one. I was puzzled by his poor reading score at the beginning of the third grade. I refused to be alarmed when his teacher tried to steer him into a tutor's arms, since this son was an early and avid bookworm. The following spring, before the next test was administered, I decided to go over a sample test with him. I noticed that he placed the palm of his hand over the reading passages as he set about selecting the right choices. Surprised, I asked him why. "There wouldn't be any point in the test if you could look back at the passage," he replied. The measure of "good reading," he assumed, was to see how much you retained after you fin-

ished reading. He thought this was eminently the “fairest” way to proceed and I had a hard time persuading him to shift his technique for the mere value of getting a higher score.

That same year I began teaching kindergarten in Harlem. I was full of confidence that I could turn my students into good readers. All I needed was time. I persuaded the principal to create a kindergarten-through-third-grade wing of four classes that I could oversee for four years.

When the first group reached the age at which New York City starts testing (second grade), I was confident that we would have demonstrated the advantage of our methods. I was startled to discover that children who I thought to be reading well did not, in fact, generally score well. For the first time I was forced to look the tests over to see what was happening.

A Look at Children Taking Tests

I PROCEEDED to look over the tests in what was, apparently, an unusual way. I tape-recorded several hours of interviews with young children in which we went over parts of the test together. (The results were published in *Reading Failure and the Tests*, in 1973. See Note ² p. 466.) I discovered that there were students who could read the stories with apparent oral fluency and discuss the contents with me intelligently, but still got the answers wrong. Reading skill usually helped—but it was far from sufficient. Children got the wrong answers for a variety of reasons, often reasons that demonstrated both their intelligence and their determination to invest reading with meaning.

I realized that I had a kind of intuitive sixth sense that had made me a good testee. Pressed for the first time to justify my right selections against the logic of an intelligent and self-confident seven-year-old, I felt less sure of myself.

Sometimes their answers were based on experiences, interpretations, and associations that would not have occurred to me, yet that

seemed eminently reasonable. Here are some examples * :

Some days I should stay in bed. Today was one of those days.
“Good morning,” Mom said. “Don’t you have a clean shirt to wear? That one looks dirty.”
“Sam,” said Dad, “your shoes are on the wrong feet.”
I got dressed all over again. By the time I ate breakfast, my cereal was soggy. Then I stopped, as usual, for Bill. He was not home. He had already gone to school. I walked there alone.
When I got to school, Bill yelled, “Here comes Sam, the snail.”
Why was Sam so slow in getting to school?
☐ He overslept.
☐ He had to get dressed twice.
☐ He fooled around.
☐ He did not like school.

Most of the children with whom this question was discussed said “Sam was fooling around.” A few children said “He probably didn’t like school; that’s why he was fooling around and his friends called him a snail.” The correct answer is: **He had to get dressed twice.**

To keep means to _____ ☐ carry ☐ hold

After the test, Derrick said, “When I want to **keep** something, I **carry** it.”
“No,” said Yvette, “when I want to **keep** something, I **hold** it.”

- There were others who arrived at different answers because they were clearly still thinking in what Jean Piaget calls “the concrete operational stage”—using a kind of logic that the test is not designed to tap or accept:

* Text of the tests, and authors’ comments (in contrasting type), are excerpted from *Standardized Reading Tests*, a pamphlet by Ann Cook and Deborah Meier, Published by the North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation (Grand Forks, N.D.: University of North Dakota, Center for Teaching and Learning).

An architect's most important tools are his—

- (E) pencil and paper
- (F) buildings
- (G) ideas
- (H) bricks

Most children selected (E) pencil and paper. Was it "reading ability" or something else that led others to the "right" answer, (G) ideas?

A *giant* is always (E) huge (F) fierce (G) mean (H) scary

The correct answer is **huge**. But if children pick **scary**, does that mean they are "wrong" or that they can't read **huge**, **fierce**, or **mean**? or **giant**?

- Still others arrived at the wrong conclusion because they were engaged in a somewhat different task (like my son), due to a misunderstanding of the directions.

Choose the word that *best* completes each sentence.

- A sage individual is
5. touchy 7. testy
6. old 8. wise

Mark selected "old" to complete the sentence. The testmaker's answer was "wise." What was actually wanted was a *synonym* though this was never stated in the instructions.

- Some select the wrong answer because they simply do not possess a specific piece of information that is not generally assumed to be part of the curriculum:

The frequency of a sound determines its—

- (1) treble (3) pitch
- (4) volume (4) harmony

- I tried another strategy: I read the passages and the questions aloud. I was surprised to realize that many children did not do any

better now that they were entirely relieved of the task of "reading" and only required to "comprehend." Their difficulty lay not in the "reading qua reading"! Rather they still were dealing with difficulties that related either to unfamiliarity with content, the abstract reasoning required, or difficulty in deciphering the meaning of the task itself.

It struck me that it was much trickier than I had supposed to test the skills of "reading." Reading involves content—always a *particular* subject matter. If I took a test—such as the State of New York's Regents' examination in physics—and got a low score, the assumption would not be that I needed remedial reading. Most people might suggest I take a course in physics. Yet the New York Physics Regents' exam is actually a kind of reading test. One reads passages and then selects from among multiple-choice answers—though we recognize that knowledge of physics is essential to dealing with this reading material. We know also that the New York Regents' test presupposes a particular kind of background in physics (it helps if one has been schooled in the areas on which this test focuses)—particularly the terminology of the testing instrument.

The apparently simple paragraphs on even the second- or third-grade reading tests also have their subject matter and a certain technical terminology to describe that subject matter. They also have a particular syntactical style that may or may not be familiar to the testee. Finally, they demand skill in taking tests, a technical subject in itself.

The test my seven-year-olds were measured by that spring included passages that required knowing that the terms "English" and "British" referred (inaccurately!) to the same peoples; that a tree trunk had "rings" inside (and not the kind you wear on your finger); that oceans have tides (and that they go in and out every 12 hours); that penicillin is a drug; that 1865 is 100 years before 1965—and other facts that are unlikely material for a sound second-grade curriculum (unless the teacher has peeked at the test ahead of time)!

Even when children were not baffled by the subject matter, or not led astray by false but

clever guesses at unfamiliar terms, they still often missed the testers' logic for selecting one particular answer over all others. For reasons I did not yet understand, there was always at least one "almost right," "misleading," or "tricky" selection to distract the unwary testee from the "right" answer.

This pattern was so clear that I began to suspect that it couldn't be just poor test construction. Rereading Banesh Hoffmann's brilliant book *The Tyranny of Testing* (New York: Collier, 1964), I noticed that at a moment of surprising honesty, one publisher admitted that the correctness of an answer was not actually the fundamental criterion. This seemed outrageous, but correctible.

Impact on School Reform

SO I BECAME A CRUSADER and mini-expert. I read about tests, worked to improve their content and eliminate ambiguity and bias, to explain their limitations to parents and teachers—and to demand alternative methods of reporting data and gathering information. I found myself growing angrier about the subject and probably shriller.

A new promising movement in early childhood education, which respected intelligent activity and aimed at an intellectually purposeful curriculum, was derailed. Instead, we were being pushed into programs aimed at ever narrower and more trivial subskills that, it was hoped, would show up quickly on paper-and-pencil tests. The heart of a good education—respect for subject matter and intellectual inquiry—was sidetracked in favor of prescribed kits filled with disguised reading tests, hundreds of one-paragraph reading "tasks" followed by multiple choices. Schools became coaching institutions preparing their subjects for the tricky world of tests (the "real world"). If test-coaching had actually also been a good way of making children into readers, it might have been less disastrous. But since "good reading" requires knowledge about the world, a narrow focus on testing "skills" deprives children of the substance of literacy in a quest for good scores. Furthermore, many of the strategies that seem to

support good test-taking are really counter-productive to those we need when we read competently.

A good reader, for example, must take a lot of risks in the process of reading most material. These risks lead to errors. But the importance of these errors, and the extent to which they are even "noticed" and thus corrected, depends upon their impact on meaning. Redundancy and involvement in the meaning of the material generally corrects the errors that good readers make as they proceed fairly rapidly through the written page. But reading tests, which involve fairly short and generally pointless passages followed by trick questions and answers, require being constantly alert to precisely the kinds of errors that are unimportant in most real reading. Also, the heavy emphasis on phonics, syllabification, and pronunciation in most tests for young children require schools to overemphasize slow oral reading, the conscious mastery of phonic rules and word-perfect, pronunciation-perfect reading. Thus regardless of whether a child is in need of such help or getting it, and despite evidence that an emphasis on such skills may reduce many children's speed, fluency, and capacity to read silently—such instruction is doggedly pursued *because it is needed for the tests*.

Test Scores

THE BIGGEST IRONY of all is that none of this can lead to its promised end: an overall improvement in the test scores of our nation's children, or even an upward shift by any substantial subgroup of children within the school system.

Newspaper editors, school boards, and groups of aroused citizens clamor for higher standards and an end to the high rate of illiteracy. Despite millions in federal subsidies, the number of ill-educated children remains constant, they say, and is still increasing in low-income urban areas.

In vain, it seems, do a few educators occasionally point out that by definition scores on these kinds of tests can never change nationwide. Half the students must always be

labeled “above” and half “below” grade level. It’s as pointless to demand that most students score in the top half as it would be to insist that all the teams in the American League make it into the playoff, or have won/lost records of better than 0.500. A sportswriter making such a silly demand would be at the end of his career. The same does not apply to those who write about education. Even the more “modest” demand that all high-school graduates be brought up to a “tenth-grade level” is statistically nonsense. For what does it mean to say a twelfth-grade student is reading at a “tenth-grade level”? It means that a student’s score is at a point along the normal curve labeled by the test-makers “tenth grade.” A “tenth-grade level” is merely a percentile point. Although different test publishers put grade levels at somewhat different places on the curve, “two years below grade level” is always still a fixed percentile (generally around the 25th percentile). It does not, in fact, mean the student reads like a tenth grader. The percentage of students on the “tenth-grade level” is as fixed in stone on any particular test as is the midpoint. For 25 percent of those tested must always be in the top 25 percent, and 25 percent in the bottom 25 percent.

Let us not forget that the scores on such tests are only stand-ins for rank-order place. If we greatly improved our techniques for teaching either reading or testing, the test-makers would in turn either have to change the scoring system so that more right answers were needed to obtain the same “score” or develop a new and more difficult test. A more difficult test might consist of one with more difficult reading material, more difficult questions, or simply trickier questions with subtler nuances.

As long as we have both tests and a scoring system designed to produce a rank order, there will not be and cannot be a rise in the reading scores of all the students of the United States. Everyone can and should read better, be better educated, and have a larger fund of knowledge. But our measuring instrument guarantees that, through it, we can never know if we are achieving that goal.

How Is a Test Designed?

IF A TEST SCORE IS simply a statement about a particular child’s rank order, it is only as accurate as the test-makers’ ability to predict how all the rest of the children in the country would respond to the same test. The test-makers must figure out accurately how to design items that will conform to such a prediction. They must figure out which items will be answered wrong by which particular kind (group, category) of children. Only in this manner could the test-makers live up to the guarantee that their sample (the population they used to “norm” the test in the process of development) will reflect the population as a whole.¹ For this purpose they need items that are not too easily susceptible to teaching or coaching, since that would quickly cause a test to be out-dated and its predictions to be incorrect. This requires a complex and arduous task that takes publishers five to seven years of conscientious labor to produce. The amount of technical skill, money, and effort spent is considerable.

As a result of this effort, the test-makers know, before the test is actually put into use in our classrooms, what kinds of children will get what particular kinds of items wrong, and what kinds of children will get them right. The test-makers know that their test is relatively “teacher-proof,” and that certain children from certain population subsamples will have trouble of a predictable sort with the items the test-makers have selected, while others will not. This requires a test that is as impervious as possible to the impact of schooling. The test-producers are staking their reputations and investments on their predictions.

To accomplish this, the test-makers need items that almost certainly will discriminate between children in the top 1 percent and the other 99 percent, the top 5 percent and the other 95 percent, and so forth. As I tell children before I begin a test these days, “Remember, they went around the country asking kids your age questions. They had to find some questions that they don’t expect you to know the answer to. So don’t be upset when you

come upon them.” What matters is not the absolute “fairness” or even “accuracy” of the right choices, but only the test-makers’ ability to distinguish certain types of readers from other types and in so doing to produce a predetermined scoring pattern known as the normal curve.²

For this to work, one needs to start with fairly clear and preconceived ideas about who the “good” readers are. Most tests use other tests—both other reading tests *and* IQ tests—as their external standard or validation. Given this background, it begins to be clear why the passages and the right answers often seem “unfair” to my East Harlem pupils. (It’s the same process used by the developers of early IQ tests who used their subjects’ occupations as the external standard or criterion of intelligence.) This explains why the test-makers do not select those terms or associations that would create a built-in bias favoring the language or experience of my Harlem students over that of children of highly educated and powerful parents.

Where Are the Built-in Prejudices?

A CLOSE EXAMINATION of the tests shows many examples in which choice of vocabulary, subject matter, style of language, metaphors selected, word and idea associations, and values presuppose a certain kind of social and personal history. I’m good at guessing the right answers because I have been steeped in the assumptions upon which the test-makers build their system. I do not even have to stop and imagine what the test-makers want me to think, feel, or say. The mark of an easy test is precisely that it does not require us to call upon consciously learned data; the right answer seems obvious, like “common sense.”

When I was preparing for the National Teachers’ Exam, I recognized that since my particular educational experiences might not coincide with the test-makers’, I would have to spend time looking over old tests so that I could get a better handle on the biases of the NTE. For a young child this kind of conscious distancing and abstracting is virtually

impossible. At any age it imposes a handicap on those who are “outside” the culture that the test is rewarding.

This explains why we are right to advise certain children to give their first and unthought-out response to multiple-choice items—“don’t stop and think deeply,” we tell them. Quick intuition, not deep thought, is the best guide—but only if you’re part of the subculture that the test was designed to reward. It’s bad advice for equally logical and intelligent children whose intuition will lead them astray. Such children need to exercise the kind of intellectual caution I had to rely on with the NTE—a process that at the very least slows them down.

When the issue of test bias was first raised, the test-makers responded by obligingly changing rural stories to urban ones, coloring their stick figures black, and eliminating some archaic terms (for instance, spectacles). But our victory was irrelevant. For the tool *requires* a bias, and it does so for reasons that are not deliberately mean or biased.

Let us consider a typical example of such subtle bias. In a recent test the following story was presented:

The children lived on a pleasant tree-lined street. One morning trucks came and chopped down the trees in order to widen the road for a new 4-lane highway. When spring came, the birds and squirrels, who used to live in the tree, did not come back.

The test-makers asked the seven-year-old testees this question:

When the truck came the children were . . .
(a) excited (b) angry (c) sad (d) away

How was it that I immediately knew the right answer was (c) “sad”? And that the teachers and graduate students at a prestigious college to whom I posed this question also knew the right answer?

In real life, of course, children might be excited, or they might be angry when they see those trucks. But *no* child any of us has ever met—rich or poor, black or white, urban, suburban, or rural—is actually likely to feel

“sad.” Yet somehow “we” all knew that we were supposed to feel sad when the environment was damaged for modernization, and thus we intuitively picked (c). If we had read more carefully, we would perhaps have hesitated. Fortunately, experience has taught us to trust our intuition.

Indeed, in trying this item out on children in my school it “works” much as the test-makers intended. It may differentiate the good readers from the poorer readers, but it mainly differentiates children with one background from those with another.

We can get angry at the test-makers for this kind of question. We can get them to eliminate the grossest examples. But this only forces them to find ever subtler ways of doing the same thing. Instead, we can recognize that items such as this do indeed “work” for the purposes of this kind of test. They discriminate “appropriately.” It’s the test that is inappropriate for our purposes.

No wonder these tests correlate so highly with standardized IQ tests, as all publishers’ manuals boast. For IQ tests are strewn with precisely such questions, which test children’s knowledge about what the “society” expects of them,³ rather than their knowledge about the reality they know, or the way in which they think through problems.

While all children, for example—rich or poor, black or white—act pretty much the same way when they lose a friend’s ball, what they think they are supposed to do and feel differs. In most reputable IQ tests for young children this kind of sociological information is put to use. Children are seen as more intelligent if they offer to pay for the ball, less so if they say they’re sorry, and dumb if they say they would tell their mother.

The way children answer this question tells us little about what they would really do, or how well they can reason. Low-income children in fact may well be less likely to tell their mother than middle-class children. What it does tell us is what the adults in the child’s world tell children they “should” do and what children think the adults who are administering the test want them to say. Indeed, one of the characteristics of lower-class parents and

of teachers in lower-class schools is the constant reiteration of this “tell the grown-up” refrain; do not trust your own judgment! It’s hardly surprising that so many of these children give us the answer they think, based upon their intelligent internalizing of experience, we wish to hear.

Items that my Harlem students would get right, because here their experiences or their social values (or what they think are the school’s values) give them an edge, would be thrown out in the years of test development as being poor “discriminators.”

The tests reflect the bias of reality, we are told, and this is a reality all children have to live with.

In a sense, of course, this is true. For the knowledge base, syntax, terminology, and implicit value system of the test are those we euphemistically label “mainstream.” As such, they are the yardstick. And if, given this yardstick, those who are not in the mainstream (or better still, in the elite stream) are at a disadvantage in such tests, this is an unfairness built into life, not the fault of the tests. Tests are not, we are reminded, in business to change the world but merely to reflect it. They are charged with predicting who will do well and who will not, given the world as it is and as it probably will remain. The educational tests are designed, like their famous cousins the IQ tests, to be predictive, to select items that roughly correlate with future success.

Reading tests require a certain ability to decode visual symbols. But a child who can decode visual symbols won’t necessarily do very well on this kind of test, for the test differentiates the child “neutrally” from other equally competent “decoders” on the basis of their relative ability to handle a certain esteemed culture quickly, intuitively, and consistently. *Remember! The better the test, the less susceptible it is to the impact of teaching and schooling.* That’s what the creators of the IQ tests promised us to start with—an examination that would test what could not be influenced by do-good environmentalists. And that, too, is the technological model for the reading test, as well as its validation.

How odd indeed to create a measure for differentiating good from bad teaching based on a model that, by definition, is intended at its best to be impervious to all teaching!

My rather sweeping suggestion that our method of assessment is a fraud may seem presumptuous. I'm inclined by nature to try to state it more cautiously and with more hedges. Yet the case seems to be clear, documentable, and thoroughly damaging. If I'm correct, we cannot even determine the utility of any particular school reforms or set of reforms if we use such tests as our yardstick. Furthermore, we have distorted these very reforms in an effort to make them look good by meeting the criteria we unwittingly accepted for "success."

Efforts to produce models of education that can demonstrate the educability of the vast majority will founder similarly unless we have more legitimate ways to assess success and failure. The issue of educational evaluation and assessment indeed is critical and cannot be left to the industry that now both produces the technology and the "experts," and then sells the "curriculum" materials that promise to produce better results!

What's the Alternative?

AS LONG AS WE REMAIN wishy-washy in our criticism of these tests and seek mere improvement and modification, alternatives will not be produced. Our alternatives will be rejected because they cannot meet the myriad purposes for which present tests are used, and they cannot be as cost-efficient nor as easily administered.

If the present tests were benign—some-what misused, or overused, in short, merely in need of improvement—such criticism of alternative means of assessment would be just. But if we really want to find out about how Americans read, including comparative data on different subgroups in the population, we shall have to design a different kind of testing with that purpose alone in mind. It should not be so very difficult. It would require some in-depth, "standardized" inter-

viewing of a relatively small sample of the population. It would be interesting; but as of now we have incredibly sparse data on this most important topic.

If we want to find out what teachers and parents can do to assist children in improving their reading, we will have to seek data on the ways a child is learning. For these purposes, we must frankly admit that we have only the most imprecise skills for making assessments. The tools for measuring what is going on in a child's head are neither accurate nor scientifically objective. The best tool around is still the old-fashioned one of our grandparents: sitting down and listening to a child read and then talking together afterward. The only thing that has improved is our knowledge of what to listen for and how to recognize the array of meanings behind a child's common errors.

Parents and teachers need assistance in seeing and hearing the diagnostic richness that can come from structured reading encounters or interviews. The work of Paul and Yetta Goodman, the investigations of psycholinguist Frank Smith, the interviewing methods and insights of Jean Piaget—all these can help us make sense of a child's expressed views in a more systematic way than we once did. This can only be done on a one-to-one basis. It's time-consuming but it's also part of good teaching. Good listening can be informed by science, although in the end it remains an art. The art of good teaching begins when we can answer the questions our children are really trying to ask, if only they knew how to do so.

There are those who say you can't sell this approach to a public determined to have a single test that can measure success/failure, that can be replicated nationally, be used diagnostically, administered relatively cheaply, and that can produce a single rank order. It's hard to resist the pressure to pretend we have such a magic elixir. But it is immoral to pretend to comply. It would be as if the medical profession were to support a fraudulent common-cold pill because it was afraid to admit that at the present stage it did not possess another sure-fire cure.

If we are absolutely unable as a society to wean ourselves completely from norm-referenced tests, we might at least use them only for their claimed purpose: to compare groups, and not to make decisions about individuals. If we used the tests for that purpose, we could administer them on a random-sample basis. This would eliminate some of their worst aspects, including the impact of measurement error, coaching, curriculum distortion, and the widespread cheating that now distorts school life.⁴

We might also try reporting scores only in the manner that all test publishers and experts suggest—using either percentiles or stanines or both, rather than the alleged “grade-level” equivalence. We would thus relieve the *New York Times* of its annual lament that 50 percent of the students are either below the other 50 percent, as are 10 percent below 90 percent, and so forth.

IN THE NAME OF OBJECTIVITY AND SCIENCE, the testing enterprise has led teachers and parents to distrust their ability to know their own children; this is the greatest disservice it has done us. It's like people who need to call the weather bureau to see if it's really raining, or take marriage tests to see if they are really happy. Nothing is more harmful to a good education than this withering away of the expectation that it takes human beings to make judgments.⁵

The task of returning testing to its proper place will be difficult. And the job of eliminating those tests that serve antieducational purposes will take time. But the more we cater to the testing craze, even for short-term political and/or career ends, the more difficult it will be for us to remember what we are all about, and what is, at bottom, the problem.

Those of us who believe in educational equity are facing enormously difficult problems. We do not have all the forces of society on our side, and many are happy to find evidence for our “naivete” in regard to the educability of the majority of human beings. Our belief in democracy—that normal every-

day people can make sense of their world and learn to make decisions about it—is at stake. Literacy is a major aspect of this claim. Literacy defined as more than knowing how to write one's name or spend a certain number of years within a school house remains a distant dream for most of humanity. It is a new ideal even in our own country. But doubts regarding such aspirations are rooted not in the objective data but in our present lack of will to deliver such education. This condition is aided and abetted by our acceptance of data that we either do not understand or largely misinterpret.

Nor is it surprising in a period when conservatism is on the rise to see ideologies surface that aim to prove democracy a sentimental dream. There now is arising a renewed interest in educational tracking, new trust, on the part of some academics, in the “innate” differences between classes and castes and in the expansion of programs for the gifted, new legislative proposals to support private education, and a new set of innovations that involve so-called minimum competencies and “time-on-task.”⁶ All these antiegalitarian trends that are now flourishing are nourished by the renewed focus on testing.

To the ideologues of the New Right, the focus on testing appears correct and proper, since the free play of market forces “naturally” produces inequality in the shape of the “normal curve.” Such nonsense will someday fade. But the “normal curve,” so deeply and perniciously embedded in American education through the use of standardized norm-referenced testing, will not fade as quickly. A testing mechanism that is based upon a priori assumptions about the “naturalness” of that “normal curve” is bound to produce results reinforcing such assumptions. The much-needed development of a theory and practice consistent with democratic schooling is crippled by the existing means of evaluating and documenting educational success. It will not flourish, even in better times, until we break with the dominant ideology of 20th-century psychometrics.

Notes

¹ Such tests are thus properly called “norm-referenced standardized tests.” There are other forms of standardized tests—the driver’s test is one, and it’s not norm-referenced. Presumably everyone could pass it with flying colors. The tests we are describing are, in addition to being norm-referenced, all group-administered paper-and-pencil tests, and meet several other technical requirements with regard to their ability to predict future school success, stability, and reliability within agreed-upon limits of measurement error. The level of acceptable “error” is, for example, far too high to make decisions about individuals, although it is “acceptable” when comparing groups or making statistical predictions.

² The particular requirement of reputable norm-referenced tests for a scoring pattern that resembles a so-called normal curve is interesting in itself, and has its own particular history. See two articles that take a critical look at this and other particular hypotheses with regard to “natural” traits: Stephen Jay Gould, “Jensen’s Last Stand,” *New York Review of Books*, May 1, 1980, and Philip Morrison, “The Bell-Shaped Pitfall,” in *The Myth of Measurability*, ed. Paul Houts (New York: Hart, 1977), pp. 82-89.

For some other critical background material on testing, see James Fallows, “The Tests and the ‘Brightest’ — How Fair Are the College Boards,” *Atlantic*, March 1980. Gene Hawes, *Educational Testing for the Millions: What Tests Really Mean for Your Child* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964). Banesh Hoffmann, *The Tyranny of Testing* (New York: Collier, 1964), mentioned on p. 460. Deborah Meier, “Reading Failure and the Tests,” occasional paper (New York: City College of New York, 1973).

³ The “society” does its best, of course, to train different children in different ways—through the messages delivered by parents and teachers. “Low SES” children are actually taught certain “expectations” of what they ought to say and do to please adults that are different from the ways in which most “high SES” children are taught. Thus when they answer questions on IQ and other “norm-referenced tests” differently, they reflect their past experiences. There is no single standard for what “society” expects, but there is a single standard for what produces a high score on these tests. The standard used is the one reflecting “high SES” backgrounds—more or less.

⁴ New York City has had cheating scandals almost every year for the past five or six years, including one in which the lower courts ruled that the evidence was sufficient to prohibit the use of any of the test data. Despite the fact that virtually all those concerned have a stake in burying such

claims (teachers, supervisors, students, parents, school boards, etc.) they continue to surface. It is my belief—based upon both personal knowledge and an examination of annual score fluctuations—that cheating is so rampant today that most major city test scores are not even good “norm-referenced” data. In short, a child’s score doesn’t even reflect rank-order ability to handle the test material. A school or city that reports a major score rise is either testing a different population or cheating. Such cheating includes everything from coaching for a specific test to actual doctoring of tests and scores.

⁵ The Fall 1980 *American Educator* reports “striking differences” in effective teaching of low vs. high socioeconomic-status students. “Effective teachers of low SES pupils . . . kept instruction at a low level of complexity. . . . They tended to ask simple-answer or multiple-choice questions instead of encouraging pupils to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate.” The “effective teacher” of high SES students “is more likely to discuss the student’s answer than is the effective low SES teacher. The latter seldom amplifies, discusses, or incorporates the student’s answer. “Low SES students,” in short, “made fewer gains when teacher-student interaction was highly cognitive in nature.” This conclusion is the shocking but logical outcome of basing educational decisions on test scores. It is an example of how testing not only fails to be helpful but sabotages good education.

⁶ Unfortunately, some of the critics of standardized norm-referenced testing are treading a new, equally pernicious path, led by a new school of experts. This latest fad is variously called “competency” testing, mastery learning, testing through objectives, and minimum teaching objectives. All these various terms refer to schemes for breaking down all subject matter into small “teachable” bits that can easily be tested and scored, and when placed in an inevitable sequence from the “easiest” to the “hardest” will guarantee success. There may be some skills for which this approach is useful but, on the whole, this anti-intellectual and anticognitive approach, defying most of what we have learned about how human beings absorb information and organize ideas, is intended for children at the bottom end of the academic and social-economic scale. While today such methods are largely unmanageable, the advent of new technologies may indeed soon turn many classrooms into impersonal factories in which children process small bits and pieces of so-called knowledge or skill.

There is also a third group of people working on a very different paradigm for testing and evaluation. They are focusing on observation, interviews, description, and documentation as the primary tools of assessment. This approach seems the most appropriate and promising. □

Nadine Fresco

The Denial of the Dead

On the Faurisson Affair

Had he been able to attend the meeting of the First Civil Court on June 1, 1981, at the Palais de Justice in Paris, Hitler would undoubtedly have been overjoyed. Close to 40 years after the masterful—albeit incomplete—realization of his attempt to annihilate the life of the Jews, there were new zealots at work to annihilate the death of the Jews. In effect, the court was called upon to pass judgment on works of a new evangelist (literally, bearer of good news), Robert Faurisson.¹ Faurisson had first been heard from two and a half years earlier with an article in *Le Monde* that concluded with the following words: “The nonexistence of ‘gas chambers’ is good news for poor humanity. Good news that it would be wrong to keep hidden any longer.”

Who was this new evangelist? An associate professor at the University of Lyon when the affair began, Faurisson had previously been a teacher of literature at a girls’ high school. At the time—we will return to it—the good news with respect to the gas chambers was already waiting, as it were, in the anteroom of his mind. But his first article, published in 1961, was about literature. It caused a little stir when the journal *Bizarre* offered its readers an article, at first anonymous, entitled “Has One Read Rimbaud?”² Writing about one of Rimbaud’s sonnets, Faurisson demonstrated to a skeptical literary world that if Verlaine and François Coppée had already “gotten wind of a mystification” on the part of the adolescent poet, only he, Faurisson, had

finally “arrived . . . at the simple and complete elucidation of an enigma that [now in 1961] has lasted 89 years.” The sonnet, he affirmed, “has no sense if it is not an erotic one” and rests entirely on a “mystification.”

Mystification. Let us keep the word in mind. I would not hesitate to say that it is the indispensable conceptual key for those wishing to understand Faurisson’s thought.

It took another ten years for a repeat performance. 1972: the appearance of Faurisson’s doctoral thesis, entitled “Has One Read Lautréamont?”³ There is a decided need of eyeglasses in France. The thesis begins with the following words:

A hundred years. The mystification will have lasted a hundred years. In the space of one century, Isidore Ducasse [alias Lautréamont] succeeded in mystifying some of the greatest names in literature, criticism, and scholarship, both in France and beyond. There is no example, it seems, of a literary mystification so serious and long-lived.

Faurisson’s obsession with demystification is his calling card. On page 13 of the catalog published in January 1978 by the Department of Literature and Classical and Modern Civilization of the University of Lyon-2, one finds the following: “Robert Faurisson, associate professor of 20th-century French literature. Specialization: criticism of texts and documents, investigation of meaning and counter-meaning, of the true and the false.” This Mr. Faurisson is an expert in the investigation of truth and falsehood. What a noble enterprise has directed him these many years, over numerous and difficult paths. But literature was soon to appear too narrow a field for Faurisson’s demystifying fever.

This text is a revised and abridged version of my article “Les Redresseurs des Morts” that appeared in *Les Temps Modernes* in June 1980.

If I have taken this somewhat unusual detour, via La Treumont and Rimbaud, en route to the good news about the gas chambers, it is because there, already, we can see the two panels that form the theoretical diptych of Faurisson's thought. On the one hand, received ideas, prejudices, conformity, dupes, the establishment. But also mystifications and counterfeiters. On the other hand, simplicity and common sense. And also detection, scouring, demystification.

On December 28, 1978, *Le Monde* finally published the good news that the evangelist was burning to offer poor humanity. Two months earlier, Faurisson had addressed a circular to several newspapers that began with these words:

I hope that some of the statements recently attributed to Louis Darquier de Pellepoix by the journalist Philippe Ganier-Raymond will finally lead to the public's discovery that the alleged massacres in the "gas chambers" and the alleged "genocide" comprise one and the same lie, unfortunately endorsed until now by the official history (that of the victors) and by the colossal power of the communication media.⁴

"I definitely find that they're talking about us too much at the moment," a friend said to me about that time, adding, "that's never a good thing." This "us," which included me, meant "us Jews." And in fact, in France, ever since October 1978, on the radio, in the newspapers, on television, everything seemed to be about us. All this had begun with the interview with Darquier published in *l'Express*,⁵ to which Faurisson alluded.

Darquier had been general commissioner of Jewish Affairs from May 1942 to February 1944 and had personally overseen the successful operation tactfully called "Spring Breeze," better known as "*Rafle* [Roundup] *du Velodrome d'Hiver*." Despite his advanced age, Darquier had lost none of his anti-Semitic vitality. He explained that the only thing gassed in Auschwitz was the lice. "After the war, the Jews fabricated thousands of falsehoods," by which "they intoxicated the entire world."

This interview caused quite an uproar and,

for some time, the French talked about the collaborators and those who were given amnesty, about Touvier, Leguay, Bousquet. They pitied, in retrospect, the fate of the unfortunate Jews handed over to the Nazis by a few bad men. And Pétain's ashes that were, it appears, finally to have been transferred to Douaumont, site of heavy combat during the First World War, remained discreetly piled in their little corner.

And when the three state-controlled TV channels refused to acquire the American series *Holocaust*, the unrest caused by the Darquier interview brought a reconsideration of this decision by the Second Channel. For the next 15 days, France lived with the biweekly tale of the genocide. The paradox was that this broadcast went a long way toward appeasing consciences. What was projected on French screens was indubitably sad, but it all happened, thank God, far from us. One could, thus, comfortably begin again to pity the Jews and condemn the Nazis. Neither of them was French. Everything was back in order.

It was during that period, some time between Darquier and the *Holocaust* series, that Faurisson entered the public scene. Rewarded for his perseverance, he saw his text finally published in *Le Monde* under the title "'The Problem of the Gas Chambers' or 'The Rumor of Auschwitz.'" The readers of Maurice Bardèche's magazine *Défense de l'Occident* [Defense of the West] had already been privileged, as of June, to read the complete version of this document.⁶ Faurisson's defenders explain that he had no choice but to appear under the banner of Bardèche because no one else would publish the text. It seems to me that, on the contrary, there is always a choice between seeing oneself published by fascists and not being published at all. Conscious of the fact that the circulation of this extreme right-wing magazine was rather limited, Faurisson was careful to send his text to a number of important people, appending the following supplement:

Conclusions (from thirty years of research) of revisionist authors: (1) Hitler's "gas chambers" never existed. (2) The "genocide" (or the "at-

tempted genocide”) of the Jews never took place; clearly, Hitler never ordered (nor permitted) that someone be killed for racial or religious reasons. (3) The alleged “gas chambers” and the alleged “genocide” are one and the same lie. (4) This lie, essentially of Zionist origin, permitted a gigantic politico-financial swindle whose principal beneficiary is the State of Israel. (5) The principal victims of this lie and swindle are the Germans and Palestinians. (6) The tremendous power of the media has, until now, assured the success of the lie and prohibited the freedom of expression of those denouncing the lie. (7) The supporters of the lie now know that it is about to be uncovered; they distort the meaning and nature of revisionist research; they call “resurgence of nazism” or “falsification of history” what is only a just return to the concern for historical truth.⁷

Circulars, articles, supplements. . . . Faurisson finally had an audience. But the reward had its flip side. Once public, such revelations could hardly avoid calling forth immediate reactions. At Lyons, there were displays of antipathy and Faurisson was lightly molested by Jewish students. Consequently, the president of the university chose to suspend his classes.

The reaction attested to a partisan sensibility that appeared unusual in a place traditionally devoted to the calm and respect that the evangelist thought he had every right to expect. Since that calm seemed decidedly difficult to regain, the unfortunate professor was compelled, in May 1979, to request of the secretary of education a transfer to teaching correspondence courses. The transfer was duly accorded, undoubtedly with the hope that such a measure would, little by little, help people forget the turmoil caused by the indelicacy and ingratitude with which the results of almost 20 years of work had been met.

With a moving sobriety, Robert Faurisson described those 20 years in a letter published in *Le Monde* on January 16, 1979:

Up until 1960, I believed in the reality of these tremendous massacres in the “gas chambers.” Then, upon reading Paul Rassimier, ex-deportee of the Resistance and author of *Le Mensonge d’Ulysse* [The Lie of Ulysses], I began to have doubts. After fourteen years of personal reflections, then four years of assiduous re-

search, I became convinced, like twenty other revisionist authors, that I was confronting a historical lie. . . . In vain I searched for a single deportee capable of proving that he had actually seen, with his own eyes, a “gas chamber”. . . . I would have been satisfied with even the slightest proof. That proof I never found. What I found instead were many false proofs, worthy of a witch trial.

• May 1979: a tract circulates in Paris, entitled “Are the Gas Chambers Indispensable to Our Happiness?” and signed by “persons without qualities.” In the middle of this tract, a sentence: “Professor Faurisson is a man alone.” June 1979: a faction of the ultraleft, *La Guerre Sociale* [The Social War], prints a poster-tract with the headline “Who is the Jew?” One will have already guessed that the Jew today is none other than Robert Faurisson. April 1980: *La Vieille Taupe* [The Old Mole], a publishing house recently founded by another militant of the ultraleft, Pierre Guillaume, publishes a book by Serge Thion, *Vérité historique ou vérité politique? Le dossier de l’affaire Faurisson. La question des chambres à gaz* [Historical Truth or Political Truth? The File of the Faurisson Affair. The Question of the Gas Chambers].⁸ On page 2 Thion writes,

One can certainly say that Mr. Faurisson is a man of the right and, to be even more precise, a sort of right-wing anarchist. Nevertheless, one must also remember that until the beginning of this affair, many of his students and colleagues took him to be a man of the left. He is, by all standards, a man alone.

Robert Faurisson or the loneliness of the long-distance investigator. . . . In France, then—and the particularity is not without interest—it is a segment of the ultraleft that generously comes to the rescue of the solitary, oppressed new Jew. And since so generous a movement would hardly wish to be hindered by borders, a petition soon circulates in American universities that “claims for Faurisson the right to continue his research without impediment.”⁹ Supporter of civil rights and free speech, and a friend of Serge Thion, Noam Chomsky signs this petition with, if I may say so, his eyes closed.

Poor Chomsky, innocent victim of a quasi-Pavlovian automatism. Someone mentions “rights”; he signs. Someone says “freedom of speech”; he signs. He goes even further with the famous preface (which is not really a preface, although it strangely resembles one) to Faurisson’s book *Mémoire en défense* [A Memoir in Defense].¹⁰ The press seized on the event,¹¹ and I leave to others the delicate pleasure of pinpointing the ambiguities and contradictions that run through Chomsky’s comments about the preface. But it is important to emphasize that the Faurisson affair is not an issue of legal rights. Faurisson’s right to teach was not withdrawn. His books have not been the object of either seizure or censure. He has not been denied access to public libraries or archives. The suit against him is a private litigation.

If the Faurisson affair did not become a rights issue in France, it was for the simple reason that it wasn’t one. And this explains how reviewers here could have seen Chomsky’s defense of Faurisson’s rights as irrelevant—or as implying that, in Chomsky’s opinion, Faurisson’s work had a legitimate claim on public and scholarly attention. Chomsky wrote in a style that is as classic as it is regrettable, attacking “the durable impact of Stalinism and doctrines of a Leninist variety, the strange Dadaist character of certain currents of intellectual life in post-war France,”¹² and describing the “hysteria and irrationality” of the “totalitarian involvements of the French intelligentsia,”¹³ and “the contempt for facts” that characterizes “French intellectual discussions.”¹⁴ There was a lamentable debate about all this, a strangely chauvinistic exchange, as ridiculous on the one side as on the other, between Chomsky—who, breaking with his usual pattern, praised the traditions of American support for civil liberties—and some Gallic cocks defending their homeland!

Clearly unable to acknowledge that he has made a mistake, Chomsky chooses to confuse everything with such remarks as these: (1) “In one of my books, *Peace in the Middle East*, published in 1974, I wrote that it [the Holocaust] was the most fantastic explosion of insanity in human history.”¹⁵ And (2) “I

don’t know enough about his [Faurisson’s] work to determine if what he is claiming is accurate or not.”¹⁶

Recall that what Faurisson “claims” is very simply that the “explosion” did not occur. Chomsky, who does not *know* if what Faurisson says is the case, explains elsewhere “we don’t want people to have religious or dogmatic *beliefs* about the existence of the Holocaust; we want them to know the *facts*. Personally I *believe* that the gas chambers existed.”¹⁷ You, Noam Chomsky, *believe* in the existence of the gas chambers: but is this mere opinion or respect (the opposite of contempt) for facts? Imagine what someone like Chomsky, for example, would have to say about such . . . rationality.

Wishing to teach the intolerant French a lesson, Chomsky incessantly refers them to their own classics,¹⁸ specifically to Voltaire. I cannot help but be annoyed (in a manner entirely irrational) by the fact that in this Faurisson affair, which, admittedly, has a little something to do with anti-Semitism—except for those with the piercing eyes of old moles¹⁹—Chomsky chooses as a model someone who in 1745 wrote about the Jews: “You will not find in them anything but an ignorant and barbarous people who have for a long time combined the most sordid avarice with the most detestable superstition.”²⁰ Of course, Voltaire added, “One should not, however, burn them.” But this last suggestion “within such a context has the effect of a kind of stylistic coda.”²¹

What appears absolute in Chomsky’s political thinking is contempt. What is relative is the object of this contempt. 1980: in his preface to *Mémoire en défense*, Chomsky writes,

I have frequently signed petitions that, in fact, were very extreme, in favor of Russian dissidents whose points of view were absolutely abhorrent, for instance, supporters of American slaughter exactly at the time it was ravaging Indochina, or of a politics favoring nuclear war, or of a religious chauvinism reminiscent of the Middle Ages. No one ever raised an objection. If someone had, I would have regarded him with the same *contempt* that those who denounce the petition in favor of Faurisson’s civil rights deserve, and for the same reasons.²²

- 1972: in an article entitled “The Fallacy of Richard Herrnstein’s IQ,” Chomsky wrote,

Imagine a psychologist in Hitler’s Germany who thought he could show that Jews had a genetically determined tendency toward usury (like squirrels bred to collect too many nuts) or a drive toward anti-social conspiracy and domination, and so on. If he were criticized for even undertaking these studies, could he merely respond that “a neutral commentator . . . would have to say that the case is simply not settled” and that the “fundamental issue” is “whether inquiry shall (again) be shut off because someone thinks society is best left in ignorance?” I think not. Rather, I think that such a response would have been met with justifiable *contempt*. At best he could claim that he is faced with a conflict of values. On the one hand, there is the alleged scientific importance of determining whether, in fact, Jews have a genetically determined tendency toward usury and domination (as might conceivably be the case). On the other, there is the likelihood that even opening this question and regarding it as a subject for scientific inquiry would provide ammunition for Goebbels and Rosenberg and their henchmen. Were this hypothetical psychologist to disregard the likely social consequences of his research (or even his undertaking of research) under existing social conditions, he would fully deserve the *contempt* of decent people. Of course, scientific curiosity should be encouraged (though fallacious argument and investigation of silly questions should not), but it is not an absolute value.²³

Replace the psychologist by Faurisson, the genetically determined tendency toward usury by the enormous politico-financial swindle that the lie about the alleged “gas chambers” represents.²⁴ In your opinion, Noam Chomsky, who in the end deserves the contempt of decent people?

Poor Chomsky, blinded by the short-sightedness of others. So old and short-sighted the mole; so strangely short-sighted Serge Thion, Pierre Guillaume, *La Guerre Sociale*, & Co. that they were unable to see of what Robert Faurisson’s alleged solitude really consisted.

- June 1978: Robert Faurisson, on University of Lyon stationery and “in my position as Associate Professor at the University of Lyon-2,” has an article published in German

by the Deutscher Arbeitskreis [the German Work Group]—a neo-Nazi faction—an article entitled “There Were No Gas Chambers.”²⁵ By way of introduction, this group reminds its readers that this eminent university professor is to be numbered among the many revisionists who neutrally devote themselves to historical truth, while “German Zionists and Jews” (sic), panic-stricken before the inexorable march of the truth, attempt in vain to perpetuate the abominable myths of crimes imputed to the Nazis.

- September 1979: at Northrup University, near Los Angeles, the first Revisionist Convention, sponsored by the Institute for Historical Review (IHR), is held.²⁶ Speakers include some of the stars of revisionist science: Austin App (editor of *The Voice of German Americans*, and author of several pamphlets of high moral tone such as *Can Christianity survive when the Jews control the media and the money?*, also *Kosher Food Racket Exposed*, and *The Six Million Swindle*—all on the booklists of Liberty Bell Publications, publishers of Nazi books); Udo Walendy (who was a member of the Executive Committee of the NPD, the German neo-Nazi party); Arthur Butz (author of the reference work of revisionist thought, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*,²⁷ which was first published by the Historical Review Press in Richmond, England, the publishing house of the English fascist party, the National Front²⁸). And then, surprise of surprises, a man climbs to the rostrum to great applause to give a scientific lecture on “The Mechanics of Gassing.”²⁹ It is the new Jew, the lonely, flouted outsider, the hero of a segment of the French ultraleft: Robert Faurisson.

- September 14, 1979: Before returning to his studies in France, Faurisson, whom Chomsky characterizes as a “relatively apolitical liberal,”³⁰ makes a short visit to the East Coast to give a lecture at the headquarters of the National Alliance (the American neo-Nazi party) outside of Washington. This visit is mentioned in the bulletin of the National Alliance, which usually is reserved for party members but, with a little wiliness, can be had. . . .³¹

The National Alliance was founded and is directed by William Pierce, former member of the American Nazi party and translator into English of a brochure entitled *Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin*.³² The National Alliance publishes the monthly *National Vanguard*, whose “purpose is to propagate the fundamental truths of race and natural order,”³³ and which, in its booklist, refers to *Mein Kampf* as the “story of Germany’s struggle for freedom and the philosophy behind it.” Faurisson the outsider, Faurisson the apolitical man, now turns out to be a member of the Editorial Advisory Committee of the *Journal of Historical Review* and lecturer for the Nazis. But I have confidence that the rhetorical talents of Serge Thion (and of Chomsky?) will find novel ways of defending the solitude and apoliticism of the “respected professor of 20-century French literature and document criticism.”³⁴

III
On the first page of *Spotlight* (a publication of the Liberty Lobby) of September 24, 1979, dedicated to the revisionist convention, an advertisement announces the book *Debunking the Genocide Myth* by Paul Rassinier.³⁵ The advertisement goes on to describe the author as

a socialist, pacifist, anti-Nazi, pro-Jewish [sic] historian and geographer [who] was captured in late 1943 and interned by the Nazis because of his activities with the French Resistance. After the war, however, Rassinier could not conscientiously justify by his own experience the horror stories of many of his fellow concentration camp inmates. So he set out on the thankless task of discovering what was true and what was false.

Rassinier’s work is of primary importance for those who want to understand the functioning and subtleties of revisionist thinking. There is not an author in the pack who does not recognize and acknowledge him as a father.

Returning from Buchenwald and Dora where he had been interned for 19 months, Rassinier immediately set to work denouncing—in *Passage de la ligne* [Crossing the Line], *Le Mensonge d’Ulysse* [The Lie of

Ulysses], *Ulysse trahi par les siens* [Ulysses Betrayed By His Own]³⁶—the behavior of the Communist prisoners, to whom the SS had delegated some power inside the camp. He concludes, with a rather dubious logic, that those responsible for the atrocities and deaths were not, therefore, the Nazis but the Communists. He severely criticizes certain inexact accounts by prisoners and deduces from these that, if there were exaggerations or even inventions with reference to the gas chambers at Dachau, the same might be true of other accounts. “My opinion about the gas chambers? There were some, although not so many as is thought. There were also exterminations by this method, although not so many as is claimed.”³⁷ In any case, there is no proof. And if some day the German archives were to reveal documents—

ordering the construction of gas chambers for any other purpose than extermination—one never knows, with this terrible scientific genius of the Germans—one would have to admit that their utilization in certain cases was the result of one or two madmen among the SS. . . .³⁸

The welcome accorded Rassinier’s ideas, at the end of the war, was not the warmest. Some, however, like Maurice Bardèche (already!), who became his publisher, were overjoyed. In the view of this confirmed fascist, the testimony of a member of the Resistance and a prisoner was of inestimable value. Bardèche published Rassinier’s *Le véritable procès Eichmann ou les vainqueurs incorrigibles* [The Actual Eichmann Trial, or the Incurable Victors], in which the author wrote that “there is almost nothing [written about war crimes] except the two admirable books by Maurice Bardèche, *Nuremberg ou la Terre Promise* [Nuremberg or the Promised Land] and *Nuremberg II ou les Faux Monnayeurs* [Nuremberg II or the Counterfeiters].”³⁹ Rassinier, renewing his confidence in his fascist publisher, gave him his new manuscript entitled *Le Drame des juifs européens* [The Drama of the European Jews], which appeared in 1964. Here, Rassinier explains that

they [the Jews] are not today a race so much as a type of life and of aspiration, and it is not a racial problem that they pose but—as the state

of Israel proves only too well—an economic and social one . . . they intend to establish a commercial empire that, as was already indicated, would cover the entire world.⁴⁰

La Vieille Taupe, which had until then only published a few brochures, transformed itself into a publishing house in order to reprint Rassinier's works: *Le Mensonge d'Ulysse* [The Lie of Ulysses] in 1979 and *Ulysse trahi par les siens* [Ulysses Betrayed By His Own] in early 1980. Four months later, Thion's book *Vérité* . . . appeared.⁴¹

The revisionists loudly call for "a debate about historical technique." They ask that efforts be made to "expand the sources" and "to publicize the results of studies, without, however, giving them a character of official truth." How respectably such things are said . . . Serge Thion, who expresses himself in this way, indeed concludes his book most judiciously by reproducing an article about Faurisson by Georges Wellers, director of the Center for Contemporary Jewish Documentation (Paris), that had appeared in *Le Monde* on February 21, 1979. Thion generously characterizes this text, entitled "*Un roman inspiré*" [An Inspired Fiction], as "a document of great importance."⁴² But let us not misunderstand this generosity. What wins Georges Wellers such critical honors is not what he says in the article but, rather, the fact that he "finally opens up a discussion of a scientific nature between two historical schools."

For the first time [continues Thion] a specialist of the official school [read: "the extermination-ists"⁴³] publicly confronts the arguments of the school called revisionist . . . For the first time, a historian shows himself dissatisfied with a teleological argument ("where does this lead?"), a political argument ("an apology for nazism") or even a sentimental argument ("outrage to the memory of the dead"). The debate is raised to the level of a historical discussion.

One finally breathes the free and invigorating air of orderly battles, far from subterranean plots and subjectivities encumbered by affect. People confront each other with arms worthy of the highest demands of a faultless deontology. But I would wager that Georges Wellers was flabbergasted when he saw what

Thion had made of his text. It was, in fact, explicitly and exclusively an analysis of the *methods* employed by Faurisson and a denunciation of the flagrant dishonesty that he represented. But, as we just witnessed, this categorical refutation of a method has miraculously been transformed, by the rigorously deontological pen of Thion, into a discussion of an argument. Hoping no doubt to have established the official recognition of the revisionist school, Thion adds, prophetically and somewhat menacingly perhaps, "Nothing and no one will be able to evade much longer the debate that we hope will be carried on with the greatest calm possible."

We are thus told of the existence of a revisionist school anxious to open discussions of a scientific nature. But the very expression "revisionist school" makes no sense. One cannot claim to be motivated solely by the need for a scientific deontology and at the same time devote oneself explicitly and entirely to the task of denunciation. One cannot pretend to establish a science whose only ethic is suspicion, where distrust is the only certitude. If one scans the list of books and articles published by the revisionist school, one discovers there one example after another of Faurisson's painful obsession with falsehood, masked by "that insistence on the love of truth that characterizes all the falsifiers"⁴⁴—*The Lie of Auschwitz*, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, *The Six Million Swindle*, *The Actual Eichmann Trial*, *The Myth of Auschwitz*, *The Truth for Germany*, etc., etc., not to omit Thion's *Historical Truth or Political Truth*, which explicitly picks up the title that Rassinier had used in 1961 for a series of lectures.

Several revisionist authors preface their writings with autobiographical comments that are strangely similar. One certainty emerges: a person is not born a revisionist; he becomes one.⁴⁵ On the first page of his *Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, Arthur Butz writes:

In common with virtually all Americans who have had their opinions formed since the end of World War II, I had, until not very long ago, assumed that Germany had given the world a

particularly murderous outburst during World War II. This view has ruled Western opinion since 1945 and earlier, and I was no exception in accepting the essentials of it.

In his turn, Serge Thion writes about his escape from the herd of dupes: "The general populace undoubtedly believes as I believed for a long time that we possess a vast number of documents and verifiable information on the politics of Nazi extermination."⁴⁶ Clearly, such is not the case. One, therefore, asks questions. And "all this converges toward a set of doubts that includes, yet goes beyond, the single question of the gas chambers."

How do these doubts work? In his letter to *Le Monde* on January 16, 1979, Faurisson cites the diary that Johann-Paul Kremer, SS doctor, kept during his tenure at Auschwitz. Kremer recounts, on October 18, 1942 that, for the eleventh time, he was present at a "special action" (*Sonderaktion*). Faurisson, who can't be had and who, like no one else, knows how to decipher a text, decides that this "special action," which the exterminationists insist on taking for a mass gassing, refers very simply to the executions of those condemned to death. Condemned by whom, when, why? It makes no difference. He writes, "Among the condemned are three women who arrived in a convoy from Holland; they are shot." This sentence is accompanied by a very impressive note that indicates the seriousness of Faurisson's work. The note consists of a biographical reference: "'Auschwitz as Seen by the SS,' published by the Museum of Oswiecim [the Polish name for Auschwitz], 1974, p. 238, note 85."

Can one imagine a more scrupulous concern for reference, precision, and scientific rigor? But then perhaps Faurisson thinks it would be rather surprising if readers of *Le Monde* had access to such a book, published so far from France and behind the Iron Curtain. Unfortunately for Faurisson, I have the book. And note 85 on page 238, which reports the official transcript of Kremer's testimony in 1947, indeed indicates that three Dutch women were shot on that day. But the text of the note to which Faurisson refers reads: "At the time of the special action which

I described in my diary on October 18, 1942, three Dutch women *refused to enter the gas chamber* [emphasis mine] and pleaded for their lives. They were young women, in good health, but despite this their prayer was not granted and the SS who participated in the action shot them on the spot." The times are decidedly difficult and it is surely with great reluctance that these evangelists find themselves compelled to tamper with facts in order to carry on their worldwide conversion.⁴⁷

The fundamental rule of revisionist argumentation is very simple: any evidence of massive extermination of the Jews in the gas chambers is unacceptable. First with respect to the Nazis. Faurisson announced some time ago what was to constitute the credo of his doctrine: "Hitler never ordered (nor permitted) that someone be killed because of race or religion."⁴⁸ If this uncontestably audacious claim seems not to bother either American, English, or German revisionists, it did provoke grumblings among some of Faurisson's defenders in France. Pierre Guillaume, head of La Vieille Taupe Publishers, in a letter sent to the newspaper *Libération* and not printed—but, fortunately, included in Thion's book—discusses the torments that he as well as his friends experienced because of Faurisson's famous statement.

I met Professor Faurisson at the end of November. I found a man desperate and on the verge of withdrawing into a paranoid delirium—a reaction that was, however, altogether understandable. I also found a man who thoroughly knew his subject (200 kilos of documents, representing the analysis of several tons of texts) and whose works were of the same general persuasion as, but went much further than, those of La Vieille Taupe. . . . As my own character was not strong enough for the task (I myself was on the verge of breaking)—it became vital for the development of the situation to gain support and, thus, to obtain everyone's agreement on a unified statement, with neither concessions nor second thoughts. This statement had, therefore, to integrate the famous sentence that seemed to render Faurisson indefensible: "Hitler never ordered the execution of a single Jew solely because of the fact that he was a Jew." [I would have the future archivists of revisionism note that the formula-

tion, as Guillaume puts it, differs from the original credo; it specifically lacks the words “or permitted,” which Faurisson seemed to insist upon.] The statement held that Faurisson’s claim was, strictly speaking, true even though Hitler could not have cared less about what actually happened to the Jews. This done, I proved in practice that I was ready to follow Faurisson to the end. . . . Feeling thus supported, Faurisson began to eat normally and his paranoid symptoms disappeared completely.⁴⁹

Admit that it would have been a shame to lose such a text.

Why, then, did the Nazis build gas chambers? At Auschwitz, as Darquier explained, only lice had been gassed; it was a question of getting rid of the vermin. Himmler himself said as much when, on April 24, 1943, he explained to the SS officers that

it is the same with anti-Semitism as with delousing. To remove lice has nothing to do with a world view. It is a question of cleanliness. In the same way exactly, anti-Semitism did not constitute for us a question of a world view. It is a question of cleanliness.⁵⁰

I do not know if Himmler would have understood Faurisson, but Faurisson understood Himmler. He demonstrates that

it is utter dishonesty to present . . . as homicidal “gas chambers” sterilizers that were actually intended to disinfect clothing with gas. . . . Another form of gassing in fact existed in the German camps; it is the gassing of buildings to exterminate the vermin. There one used the famous Zyklon B about which such a fantastic myth has been constructed.⁵¹

Unfortunately for the Nazis, the rumors about the treatment of the Jews deported to Poland were already circulating in Germany, clearly without foundation. An ordinance of November 9, 1942 announced by the Chancellery decreed that “in order to counter the development of rumors about this subject . . . the following commentaries are provided as information about the actual situation. . . .⁵² The Nazis, it would seem, were already at this period worried about combating “the rumor of Auschwitz” that Faurisson so firmly denounces today. The ordinance continued:

The total . . . elimination of millions of Jews established in the European economic area is a forced imperative in the struggle that is being waged by the German people to assure its very existence. Beginning with the territories of the Reich and moving on to the other European countries involved in the Final Solution, the Jews are transported to the East, to large camps—in part still to be built—where they are either assigned to work or sent farther East.

Faurisson, who has understood the Nazi mentality as well as that of the pseudo-victims, does not believe that the Germans felt any need to camouflage their language and has decided that for the Nazis, as for him, a spade is a spade. He certainly does not think that the expression “sent farther East” could be a euphemism of the *Amtssprache*, the administrative language used by the Nazis in their direction of the Final Solution. But what does Faurisson understand the exact meaning of “the Final Solution” to be? He most assuredly has a precise idea about this place “farther East” where the Jews disappeared. Armed with the “simple good sense” that he shares with Thion, Faurisson takes the texts “for what they are” and the Nazis at their very word. He knows that, different from Americans, Communists, Jews, etc., the Nazis did not lie. How does he know this? Never mind. The revisionists, who are experts in distinguishing the true from the false, do not believe for a moment that the Germans had recourse to an administrative language intended to camouflage their enterprise of extermination.

Contrary to Faurisson, Himmler believed that the Nazis needed to camouflage what they were doing. Thus, when the statistician Korherr, in his report to Himmler in the spring of 1943, uses the expression *Sonderbehandlung* (special treatment) to speak of the million and a half Jews already *durchgeschleust* (processed—literally: passed through the locks) in the camps, Himmler responds:

I find this report very good as regards documentation for the future, that is to say, as camouflage. At present, it [the report] should be neither published nor communicated. The essential thing for me is, now as before,

that . . . as many Jews as is humanly possible be transported to the East.⁵³

But Himmler states precisely that one should not speak of *Sonderbehandlung*, and that the term should be replaced by the word *Transportierung* (transport).

A few months later, it was this same Himmler's turn to learn a lesson in camouflage from General Pohl, chief of the WVHA (the central economic and administrative office of the SS), concerning the camp at Sobibor. Up to that point Sobibor had been referred to in the correspondence as a *Durchgangslager* (transit camp). Sobibor was located only 3 km. from the Bug River, which formed the farthest Eastern border of the territories occupied by the Nazis. To where, therefore, could the Jews coming from this camp "transit"? Himmler then writes to Pohl to propose that the camp at Sobibor be henceforth called a *Konzentrationslager* (concentration camp). But, in a letter dated July 15, 1943, the chief of the central office, on which all the Nazi camps were dependent, responds that they must continue to designate Sobibor a transit camp.⁵⁴

With the very words used by the Nazis themselves, let us now return to our Faurisson analysis of the texts. The *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (the Final Solution of the Jewish question) is therefore only a cleansing operation on a European scale. As many Jews as can be found in a region are put into railroad cars and transported Eastward for *Evakuierung* (evacuation), *Aussiedlung* (displacement), or *Umsiedlung* (resettlement). After which the region is declared *judenrein gemacht* (cleansed of Jews) or *judenfrei* (free of Jews)—a successful "*Bereinigung der Judenfrage*" (clean-up of the Jewish question). Since the vermin may offer some resistance to this salutary enterprise, the operation must be effected with *rücksichtsloser Härte* (relentless severity). The areas are, thereby, henceforth clean. But not yet the Jews. For it is known that, unfortunately, their transport to the East did not always occur under the most hygienic conditions. And so, from the moment of their arrival the majority among them were directed to the *Badanstalten* (bathhouses). The irrefut-

able proof that this was in order that they might take a shower, and not to asphyxiate them with gas, is that the areas intended for this action clearly displayed the signs "*Wasch u. Desinfektionsräume* (wash & disinfection rooms)". It was all simply a matter of getting rid of the vermin. Everything, then, accords perfectly: evacuation, cleansing, and transport farther East.

One can easily imagine, I think, that if documents dating from the war years reveal so little proof of the extermination of Jews by the Nazis, then documents originating after the German capitulation are hardly likely to reinforce the already tenuous position of the exterminationists. *Nürnberg ou la Terre Promise* [Nuremberg or the Promised Land] was written by Bardèche in 1948. Every revisionist owes it to himself to go back to this critical analysis and radical condemnation of an unjust trial—perpetrated on the vanquished by the victors—whose aim was the greatest profit for the "*amateurs* of the promised land."

The rumors of the alleged genocide of the Jews that circulated in Europe and the United States during the last years of the war constituted the principal evidence in the case for the prosecution. Nuremberg and the other war-crimes trials that have taken place since then are, therefore, according to Faurisson, in every way akin to the infamous witch trials of the Middle Ages. Once free of the so-called evidence extorted from the vanquished, only that advanced by the alleged victims remains. And it is unnecessary to say what one should think of that. When one is committed to the method routinely used by Faurisson, one sees quite easily what can be expected of the depositions of such people. It is without a doubt for this reason that Faurisson has, until now at least, neglected to examine the testimony of the survivors.

There are a great many things that Faurisson doesn't bother with. He never mentions, for example, the depositions taken during the various trials from the survivors of the *Sonderkommandos* (special commandos), who were responsible for emptying the gas cham-

bers, transporting the corpses to the crematoria and burning them, and cleaning the gas chambers for the next operation. A former member of the Auschwitz *Sonderkommando*, among others, recounted how he had actually seen with his own eyes a gas chamber. His name: Dov Paisikovic. But (1) he was Jewish and thus had every interest in accusing the Nazis of imaginary crimes; (2) after the war, he emigrated to Israel, the country par excellence of the hoax of the 20th century; (3) he has since died and Faurisson is thus unable to meet with him; (4) the detailed description he gave of the functioning of the gas chambers was part of his deposition of October 17, 1963 at the Auschwitz trial—and we know what we should think of Nuremberg and subsequent trials.⁵⁵

The basic rule of revisionist argumentation is that all evidence of extermination is by definition inadmissible. A document dating from the war is inadmissible because it dates from the war. A document dating from immediately after the war is inadmissible because it dates from those years. The deposition of a Nazi at his trial is inadmissible because it is a deposition from a trial. This is a principle applicable to all the Nazis who were tried. If, as is the case, not one of them denied the existence of gas chambers, it is not because the gas chambers existed (a feeble exterminationist thought), but because the witnesses believed that if they assisted the victors, the judges would reward them with clemency. As for the testimonies and depositions of some hundreds of Jews who pretended to be survivors of the genocide, they are inadmissible because given by people who could only be instigators or, at best, accomplices in the rumor that led to the swindle from which they benefited.

VI

In his *Wit and Its Relations to the Unconscious*,⁵⁶ Freud recounts an old story: A borrows a copper caldron from B; when he returns it, B complains that the caldron has a large hole that renders it useless. A defends himself thus: first, I returned the caldron in good condition; second, it already had a hole

when I borrowed it; third, I really never borrowed the caldron from B. Let us see how the genocide is nothing but a Talmudic story about a caldron. The story consists of these elements: First, it is the Jews who are the cause of the Second World War. They were, in fact, the first to declare war on Germany. How do I know this? First of all, from Hitler who always spoke the truth, whom I must understand literally, and who prophesied with great clairvoyance in his speech of January 30, 1939 that "If international Jewry succeeds in precipitating a world war, the result will hardly be a bolshevization of Europe and a victory for Judaism but the extermination of the Jewish race in Europe."⁵⁷

But I also know it from Faurisson and Rassinier. Faurisson explains that "in the person of Chaim Weizmann, president of the World Jewish Congress,⁵⁸ and future first president of the state of Israel, the international Jewish community declared war on Germany on September 5, 1939."⁵⁹ Rassinier, undoubtedly more aware of the labyrinthine ways of politics, explains the entire affair at length in a book that appeared in 1967 entitled *Les responsables de la seconde guerre mondiale* [Those Responsible for the Second World War].⁶⁰ I am surprised that Serge Thion, who in his book is so quick to give moral lessons to professional historians, omitted mentioning this book by Rassinier in his bibliography of revisionist literature—which, he says, "is almost inaccessible in France for various reasons."⁶¹ Thion writes that "it will be necessary, one day, to rehabilitate Rassinier." It would be especially regrettable if, on that day, the books neglected by Thion were not included. Rassinier is an author unjustly "reduced to being published by the extreme right"—he, too, then—and who "wrote before his time."⁶² Here is a sample of what Rassinier wrote before the time was ripe. In *Les responsables de la seconde guerre mondiale*, he explains how the Jews organized the war against Germany:

A Democrat, President Roosevelt was also a freemason and, consequently, his relations with the Jewish world were numerous and intimate. His entourage was Jewish, at least the

greatest number of his most important advisers. Morgenthau, his Secretary of Treasury, was Jewish; his most influential advisers, Baruch and Weizmann, were too. Cordell Hull of the State Department is married to a Jew. . . . From the moment of his election, President Roosevelt accepted—first tacitly, then more openly—all the postulates of the Jewish policies. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that he was very ill and that his sickness made him dependent on his wife who was, even more fiercely than he, devoted to the cause of the Jews. . . .⁶³

As for the Nazis,

they found it entirely normal to view the Jews as foreigners in Germany since they behaved like foreigners. Noting that this doctrine [the Nazi doctrine] would help extricate a people of 70 million from their financial market, all the Jews of the world, instead of seeking a compromise, which was easily attainable given the fact that Hitler sought one, enflamed the argument by declaring themselves . . . in a state of war, not only with Nazi ideology—which would have been perfectly legitimate and would, at worst, have generated only an academic discussion—but with Germany, which implied a military intervention.⁶⁴

The Jews declared war on Hitler. What would you have done in his place? He was not, after all, going to turn the other cheek. And so he defended himself.

- Second part of the caldron story: War is war, but nothing more. The Nazis are not guilty of the crime of which the pseudo-victims accuse them. As Butz explains, he dedicates his book (*The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, see Note 27) to proving the hoax, that is, to a demonstration of what *did not* happen. This is the crux of the revisionist program: to prove that something *did not* take place, that a crime was not committed. The gas chambers were part of the propaganda of war. Proof: Himmler, according to Butz, sensing the wind change, had made contact a little before the end of the war with a representative of the World Jewish Congress.⁶⁵ And Himmler explained to him that to stop the typhus epidemic in the camps, the Nazis had been obliged to burn a large number of corpses, for which reason they had

constructed the crematoria. It was this that caused the confusion about the gas chambers. But Himmler committed “suicide” in a British prison. This was particularly unfortunate since, if he had been able to appear before the judges, he would clearly have told the truth—a Nazi, like a revisionist, always speaks the truth. Arthur R. Butz’s book would then have been unnecessary; Himmler himself would have proven the hoax. But the demands of politics made it inconvenient that he be heard by the court. He therefore committed “suicide.” Caldron or not, one will say what one wants; reasoning like that one does not find just anywhere.

The first two phases of the story of genocide in the image of a caldron are, then, (1) the Jews are responsible for the horrors they impute to the Nazis, and (2) these horrors never existed. But the punchline, the moment one laughs, is (3) the Jews, who pretend to be the victims, are actually the victors. On the basis of this colossal lie about “gas chambers” and “genocide,” they succeeded in their incredible swindle, the greatest of all time. Make an accounting of the millions of marks paid by the Germans, in the name of reparations, for the millions of Jews who were *not* exterminated. As a swindle, it’s not a bad one. But for the hoax to work, to hit pay dirt, so to speak, it is absolutely necessary that the true victors continue to pass for the victims. Hence the need for an organization of universal scope, propaganda . . . and so on.

The revisionists’ real difficulty was to prove this void, this lie, this absence of the dead. The first of them, Rassiner, with a scholarly mixture of quotations, calculations, reasoning, deductions, cross-checking, collations, etc. challenged the estimate of the number of victims arrived at by the exterminationists. Instead, he offered figures that the reader is all the more easily able to accept for not having understood any of the scholarly mix that produced them.⁶⁶ His conclusions: some industrial gassings plus the horrors of war—altogether around a million Jewish victims. Robert Faurisson, who has the obvious advantage of working at the end of a century that increasingly resembles a computer, arrives at more scientific conclusions:

My view is the following: (1) the number of Jews exterminated by the Nazis (or victims of “genocide”) is, happily, equal to zero . . . I have rather good reasons to think that the number of deaths at Auschwitz (Jews and non-Jews) was around 50,000 . . . As for the number of deaths at all the concentration camps from 1933-34 to 1945, I think it had to be 200,000 or at most 360,000. Some day, I will cite my sources but I contend today that if we employed computers, we would without a doubt soon know the real number of deaths.⁶⁷

In *La Drame des juifs européens*, Rassinier had denounced the dishonesty of Hilberg, Poliakov, and other Zionist agents who used all their Talmudic resources to arrive at the convenient and sacred number of six million. And now he quotes abundantly from an article in the journal *American Mercury*. (A curious documentary point: the address of this journal is the same as that of the Institute for Historical Review, organizing body of the Revisionist Congresses.)⁶⁸

If it is true, as the *American Mercury* claims, that the international Zionist movement refuses to participate in a census of the world’s Jewish population—what an admission!—thereby rendering it impossible, I can hardly see how else one could discover the truth.⁶⁹

The chapter immediately following these lines, very naturally, is entitled “‘The Jewish Migration’ or ‘The Wandering Jew’” and begins with these words: “To better understand the movement of the European Jewish population between 1933 and 1945, a rapid historical overview of Jewish migration on a world-wide scale seems to me indispensable: in short, the history of ‘The Wandering Jew.’” To understand what happened to the alleged victims of the Second World War, one must go back, as Rassinier does, to the 18th century B.C. A wanderer, perhaps, but with “the agility of the merchant by calling”—and Rassinier goes on:

Today [his book appeared in 1964] it is, to speak in metaphors, the gold in Fort Knox that is eyed. If the operation succeeded—it would suffice for the American arm of the international Zionist movement to exert pressure on Wall Street for it to be so—the Israeli port of

registry of the Diaspora would become not only the commercial Center of the Atlantic world but, with oil being the energy source par excellence of its development and Jewish control of it being totally assured from the Middle East to Texas, also the command post of all its industry . . . then . . . the appellation “the Chosen People” to which the Jews lay claim would take on all its significance⁷⁰

Is it the author of these lines that Thion hopes to rehabilitate?

Rassinier had understood everything: to find who profited from the crime that was *not* committed, one had clearly to search in the camp of the alleged victims and prove the gigantic plot that is at the base of such a swindle.

But how to prove this? These Jews who dare to pretend to be dead and demand reparation are in truth alive. But feigning to be dead, they are innumerable—that is, one cannot count them. They no longer wear the yellow star, thus it is difficult to spot them at a glance. Faurisson clearly explains that the Jews with the star

were like paroled prisoners. Hitler was concerned perhaps less with the Jewish question than with ensuring the security of the German soldier. The German soldier would otherwise have been unable to distinguish the Jews from the non-Jews. This sign designated them for him. . . . I know that sometimes one thinks that six- to fifteen-year-old children could not constitute a danger and that they should not have been subjected to wearing the star. But within the context of this military logic, there exist enough accounts and memoirs [how now? should one believe these?] where the Jews tell us that from earliest childhood they participated in all kinds of illicit activity or resistance against the Germans.⁷¹

But after 1945, the wearing of the star was discontinued. How then to recognize the Jews? How count them? The proof that they are not dead, as the good sense of Rassinier, Faurisson, Thion, and Co. would have it, is that they are alive. But how demonstrate this? They move all the time, they are behind the Iron Curtain, they disguise themselves as common Americans, they change their names. Pages 327-28 of Thion’s book provides the

astounding and incontestable proof that the alleged dead are still alive.

Page 327: the little boy from the Warsaw ghetto, with his overly large cap, his frightened look, his arms raised before the German machine guns—how he caused the dupes to cry. . . . But rejoice; this little boy who, according to the exterminationist myth, was supposed to have died in a gas chamber in Treblinka, Faurisson explains, is today a very rich man living in the suburbs of London. Faurisson obtained this good news he is so eager to communicate to us from the *Jewish Chronicle* of August 11, 1978. There is nothing so striking to the imagination as to note at the end of a book on historical truth that a poor young Jew alleged to be dead is in fact alive and rich.

Page 328: same scenario. This time, the photograph is of Simone Veil. Faurisson writes,

Let us take as an example convoy #71 which arrived at Auschwitz on April 16, 1944. All the women in this convoy, we are told, were gassed on the very day of their arrival. Among them figured the name of a certain Simone Jacob, born on June 13, 1927 in Nice. Now this young woman actually returned to France; by marriage she became Simone Veil and she today presides over the European Parliament.

Again one who was supposed to have been gassed is found to be alive—and rich too. That already makes two survivors. Draw your own conclusions.

VII

In these troubled times, when one is no longer very clear about who is on the left (or right) of whom, a new pastime has emerged for the happy few who award themselves and others political marks whose common character the discerning reader will not fail to notice. Thus Thion about Faurisson: “a kind of anarchist of the right”⁷²; Chomsky about Thion: “a libertarian socialist scholar”⁷³; Jan Myrdal about Faurisson: “an anarchist of the liberal right”⁷⁴; Noam Chomsky about Noam Chomsky: “a kind of libertarian anarcho-syndicalist”⁷⁵; Chomsky about Faurisson: “a kind of relatively apolitical liberal”⁷⁶; and,

finally, last but not least (too bad for the Dadaist-Stalinist amalgam that many will not fail to notice), David McCalden, alias Lewis Brandon, editor of the *Journal of Historical Review*: “I’m a detached cynic, a libertarian with a small ‘l.’”⁷⁷

And then at the far end of the left—in France at least—there are the theoreticians, the hard and pure revolutionaries, the earthly representatives of a faultless rationalism: an ultraleft in the process of decomposition, abandoning for a time interfamilial anathemas and curiously trying to recompose itself on the basis of Faurisson’s theories.⁷⁸ During the demonstration that followed the bombing in front of the synagogue on the rue Copernic in Paris (October 3, 1980), a tract was distributed signed by diverse factions of this fragmented ultraleft—The Social War, The Young Mole (sic), The Friends of Potlach, The Commune Group of Kronstadt, and so forth. The following passages from the tract entitled “Our Kingdom is a Prison” speak for themselves:

It is the constant need of our class societies to propose to the oppressed populations false enemies, fabricated horrors in place of the true ones. . . . Enough of anti-Semitism. Enough of anti-fascism. The one and the other are the “socialism of imbeciles”. . . . The deportation and concentration of millions of people are not limited to an infernal idea of the Nazis; it has to do above all with the lack of manpower needed by the war machine that made it [war] a necessity. . . . The deportees who did not return are dead because of the war. . . . the only revolutionary attitude possible. . . . is the subversion of all war propaganda. . . . We will, perhaps, never possess “scientific” proof of the nonexistence of the Hitler “gas chambers.”

The purists of the Communist Program, the French disciples of Amadeo Bordiga were the first to introduce in France the peculiar revolutionary idea of *Auschwitz ou le grand alibi* [Auschwitz or the Grand Alibi].⁷⁹

The demystifying madness of Faurisson could not, perhaps, find a better ally than the rationalist madness of these deep minds who take Marx at face value. Hegel is turned on his head; henceforth only the rational is real. A capitalist phenomenon among others,

nazism—according to a strict Marxist theory—would hardly want to exterminate a human group that represents so much manpower. Marxism cannot account for extermination. To preserve Marxism, then, it is necessary that the extermination not have occurred; therefore, it did not. Q.E.D. The rest, the alleged gas chambers, are only “the keystone of a politico-religious fabrication,” an “official and vengeful” delirium,⁸⁰ composed of taboos and myths. And “the refusal of intellectual taboos”⁸¹ is sacred to Thion, Guillaume, and the others. Faced with the exterminationist Vulgate and the ensemble of traditional ideas that encumber contempo-

rary thought, these people are skeptics just as others are believers. “Systematic doubt, pushed to its extreme, has become healthy and legitimate.”⁸²

But we have not finished seeking the reasons that (in our world and in their minds) push certain people—among them a good number of Jews—to persist in this business of “demystification,” in this need to claim that the millions who disappeared are alive, this need tirelessly to denounce the trickery of others, this need to dedicate themselves to the peculiar role of deniers of the dead.

Translated from the French by AUDRI DURCHSLAG □

Notes

¹ A case brought against Robert Faurisson by the L.I.C.R.A. (International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism), the M.R.A.P. (Movement Against Racism and For Friendship Among People), and several associations of people who were deported and in the Resistance. Although I can understand the reasons for this action, I wholly disagree with the referral of such a matter to the judicial authorities.

² *La Bibliothèque Volante* (Paris: J. J. Pauvert, July 1971).

³ Paris: Gallimard, 1972.

⁴ Serge Thion, *Vérité historique ou vérité politique? Le dossier de l'affaire Faurisson: La question des chambres à gaz* (Paris: La Vieille Taupe, 1980), p. 93. Cited hereafter as *Vérité*. . . .

⁵ November 4, 1978.

⁶ *Défense de l'Occident*, June 1978.

⁷ *Vérité*. . . , p. 89.

⁸ On the back of the book, Thion is described as “having entered political action during the Algerian War and having participated, in a concrete and critical fashion, in numerous other anticolonial activities.”

⁹ *Vérité*. . . , p. 163. The text of the petition: “Dr. Faurisson has served as a respected professor of 20th-century French literature and document criticism for over four years at the University of Lyon-2 in France. Since 1974 he has been conducting independent historical research into the ‘holocaust’ question. Since he began making his findings public, Professor Faurisson has

been subject to a vicious campaign of harassment, intimidation, slander, and physical violence in a crude attempt to silence him. Fearful officials have even tried to stop him from further research by denying him access to public libraries and archives. We strongly protest these efforts to deprive Professor Faurisson of his freedom of speech and expression, and we condemn the shameful campaign to silence him. We strongly support Professor Faurisson’s just right of academic freedom, and we demand that university and government officials do everything possible to ensure his safety and free exercise of his legal rights.”

¹⁰ R. Faurisson, *Mémoire en défense: Contre ceux qui m'accusent de falsifier l'histoire* (Paris: La Vieille Taupe, 1980).

¹¹ *Le Monde*, December 20 and 24, 1980; *Le Matin*, December 24 and 26, 1980, January 19, 1981; *Libération*, December 23, 1980; the *Nation*, January 28, 1981, etc.

¹² Preface to *Mémoire en défense*, p. xiii.

¹³ *Le Matin*, January 19, 1981.

¹⁴ *Le Monde*, December 24, 1980.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Libération*, December 23, 1980.

¹⁷ *Le Matin*, January 19, 1981. Emphasis mine.

¹⁸ Preface to *Mémoire en défense*, p. xii; *Libération*, December 23, 1980; *Le Matin*, January 19, 1981; the *Nation*, December 28, 1981.

¹⁹ In French there’s the expression, “as short-sighted as

a mole." On the anti-Semitism of Voltaire, see Leon Poliakov, *Histoire de l'antisémitisme, III: De Voltaire à Wagner* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, Paris: 1968), pp. 103-117.

²⁰ *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, "Juif," in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Moland, XIX, pp. 511-541.

²¹ L. Poliakov, *Histoire . . .*, p. 106. (See Note 19.)

²² Preface to *Mémoire en défense*, p. xii. Emphasis mine.

²³ *Social Policy*, May/June 1972, reprinted in *Human Behavior*, ed. T. G. Bever and H. S. Terrace (New York: Warner, 1973), pp. 24-25. Emphasis mine.

²⁴ *Vérité . . .*, p. 89. Today's social conditions are clearly not those of Nazi Germany but what is it that allows Chomsky, when he speaks of "the old anti-Semitism that is presently exploding with violence" (Preface to *Mémoire en défense*, p. xiii), to claim, in a peremptory manner, that Faurisson's thesis "has no political or human consequences" (*Libération*, December 23, 1980)? Why does he refuse to see to what extent the one (the thesis) nourishes and rejuvenates the other (the "old" anti-Semitism)?

²⁵ *Deutscher Arbeitskreis*, Witten (Germany), 1978.

²⁶ See *Searchlight*, no. 56, 1980. A second Revisionist Conference was held in California in August 1980. A third is to take place in November 1981 at the Arrowhead Conference Center of the University of California. The I.H.R. (whose director is "Lewis Brandon") publishes the *Journal of Historical Review* (whose editor is "Lewis Brandon"). On "Lewis Brandon" and the bogus \$50,000 award offered by the I.H.R. to anybody who could prove that people were actually killed in Nazi gas chambers, see the *New York Times*, March 4, 1981 and the *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1981.

²⁷ Arthur R. Butz, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (Torrance, Calif.: The Noontide Press, 1977).

²⁸ On the National Front, see M. Billig, *Fascists: A Social Psychological View of the National Front* (New York: Academic Press, 1978).

²⁹ *Journal of Historical Review*, I, no. 1, Spring 1980, pp. 23-32.

³⁰ Preface to *Mémoire en défense*, p. xv.

³¹ *National Alliance Bulletin*, October 1979, P.O.B. 3535, Washington, D.C. 20007.

³² Dietrich Eckart, *Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin*, Copyright 1966 by Dr. W. Pierce. Reprint from the Spring 1966 issue of *National Socialist World*.

³³ *National Vanguard*, no. 59, April 1978, p. 8.

³⁴ First sentence of the petition for Faurisson, see Note 9.

³⁵ Not possessing this book, I do not know which of Rassiner's following works is translated here: *Le véritable procès Eichmann* (Paris: Les Sept Couleurs, 1962); *Le Drame des juifs européens* (Les Sept Couleurs, 1964); *Les responsables de la seconde guerre mondiale* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1967). Anyway, the Eng-

lish title that was chosen (by whom?) has the merit of not being burdened with linguistic subtleties.

³⁶ *Passage de la ligne*, ed. Bressanes, 1948; *Le Mensonge d'Ulysse*, ed. Bressanes, 1950; *Ulysse trahi par les siens* (1st ed., Paris: Librairie Française, 1961; rev. ed. of both, Paris: La Vieille Taupe, 1979-80).

³⁷ *Le Mensonge d'Ulysse*, rev. ed., 1979, p. 170.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172.

³⁹ *Le véritable procès Eichmann*, p. 43.

⁴⁰ *Le drame des juifs européens*, p. 8.

⁴¹ *Vérité . . .*, see Note 4.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 336.

⁴³ "Exterminationist" is Faurisson's expression for those who persist, often for very bad reasons, in rejecting the good news.

⁴⁴ Vidal-Naquet, speaking of Faurisson in his excellent article "Un Eichmann de papier" [A Paper Eichmann], *Esprit*, September 1980, pp. 8-52. The article is reprinted in his work *Les Juifs, la mémoire et le présent* [The Jews, Memory, and the Present] (Paris: Maspéro, 1981); partially translated into English in *Democracy*, April 1981.

⁴⁵ R. Faurisson: "The deportees died of hunger, cold, sickness . . . To all these horrors is there any need to add that, much more abominable and perfectly demonic, of the gas chambers? I believed it; I now hardly do. But doubt does not prohibit research; on the contrary," *Vérité . . .*, p. 63. That was in 1974; he "hardly" believed it. "Certainty" was to come only four years later (see above).

⁴⁶ *Vérité . . .*, p. 30.

⁴⁷ In *Mémoire en défense*, one can find the development of Faurisson's analysis of Kremer's journal. As Pierre Vidal-Naquet writes, "In Faurisson's own chosen domain, that of philological exactness and translation, his interpretation is a misconstrual; in the domain of intellectual morality and scientific integrity, it is a fake." *Democracy*, p. 88.

See also G. Wellers, *Les chambres à gaz ont existé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981).

⁴⁸ *Vérité . . .*, p. 89.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

⁵⁰ H. Himmler, *Discours secrets* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), p. 204.

⁵¹ *Vérité . . .*, p. 172. In his journal entry for Sept. 5, 1942, Kremer writes: "In the evening at about eight o'clock, I again witness a special action [Sonderaktion] with people from Holland." *Auschwitz vu par les S.S.*, pp. 228-229. Clearly obsessed with the problem of cleansing, Faurisson writes about this entry that he is "in a position to specify" that this special action consisted in a "cleaning of railroad cars, either 3rd-class or of the kind in which the new prisoners had just arrived." *Mémoire en défense*, p. 34.

⁵² J. Billig, *La solution finale de la question juive*, Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Paris, 1977, p. 77.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

- ⁵⁴ R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Franklin Watts, 2nd ed., 1973), p. 619.
- ⁵⁵ L. Poliakov, *Auschwitz* (Paris: Julliard, 1964), pp. 159-171.
- ⁵⁶ Paris: Gallimard, 1974, p. 99. In the standard edition of Freud's *Collected Works*, vol. VIII.
- ⁵⁷ L. Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la haine* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1951; 2nd ed., 1979), p. 35.
- ⁵⁸ Chaim Weizmann was never president of the World Jewish Congress. On Faurisson's error, see Vidal-Naquet in *Esprit*, pp. 37-38. See Note 44.
- ⁵⁹ *Vérité*. . . , p. 187.
- ⁶⁰ P. Rassinier, *Les responsables*. . . (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latine, 1967.) See Note 35.
- ⁶¹ *Vérité*. . . , p. 341.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 165.
- ⁶³ P. Rassinier, *Les responsables*. . . , p. 205.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- ⁶⁵ A. R. Butz, *The Hoax*. . . , p. 205. (See also Note 27.)
- ⁶⁶ On Rassinier's computations, see G. Wellers, *La solution finale et la mythomanie néo-nazie* (Paris: Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, 1979), and P. Vidal-Naquet in *Esprit*, pp. 31-36.
- ⁶⁷ *Vérité*. . . , p. 197.
- ⁶⁸ P.O. Box 1306, Torrance, Calif. 90505. It is all in the family. The address of the group behind all these endeavors, the Legion for the Survival of Freedom, happens to be P.O. Box 1306, Torrance, etc.
- ⁶⁹ P. Rassinier, *Le drame*. . . , p. 126.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- ⁷¹ *Vérité*. . . , p. 189.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- ⁷³ *The Nation*, February 28, 1981.
- ⁷⁴ *Svenska Dagbladet*, March 5, 1981.
- ⁷⁵ *Le Monde*, December 24, 1980.
- ⁷⁶ Preface to *Mémoire en défense*, p. xv.
- ⁷⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1981.
- ⁷⁸ See the articles of Jacques Baynac, "La gangrene," *Libération*, October 25-26, 1980, and "Querelle d'Allemands?" *Le Matin*, December 26, 1980.
- ⁷⁹ First published in *Programme communiste*, no. 11, April/June 1960; 2nd ed., La Vieille Taupe, 1970.
- ⁸⁰ "De l'exploitation dans les camps à l'exploitation des camps" [from the exploitation in the camps to the exploitation of the camps], *La Guerre sociale*, May 1981, p. 13.
- ⁸¹ *Vérité*. . . , p. 14.
- ⁸² "De l'exploitation. . . ," p. 22. The same social warriors explain that their objective "is not to cause the greatest possible number of people to doubt the existence of the 'gas chambers' " but, rather, "to desacralize that which, in any case (my emphasis), has taken on mythic proportions," *ibid.*, p. 20. What should we make of this "in any case"? And what are we to think of the linguistic subtleties of Yvon Chotard, one of Faurisson's lawyers? Mr. Chotard explains: "Had the gas chambers not existed, they would constitute the perfect image of the unacceptable extermination of those who were deported to death camps. If there was a myth, which I do not believe, it would be a metaphor" (*Le Monde*, June 11, 1981). □

David Bromwich

Melodrama and History

Any five minutes of Truffaut show his quickness, his intelligence, his authority in matching images with words, or using them to surprise each other, and his unrelaxed interest in the progress of a story. He sets the pace better than other directors, and he varies it better. These qualities make his admirers partial: what Truffaut cannot do strikes them for that reason as less worth doing. But good things while we are caring for them all exist by exclusion, and I admit *The Last Metro* has made me exclusive again. It is not quite so fine as *Shoot the Piano Player*, *Jules and Jim*, *The Wild Child*, or *Adele H.*, but it shares their spirit. The story is a love triangle. Lucas Steiner, a Jewish theater manager and director, is forced, during the Nazi occupation of Paris, to hide in the basement of his own theater. His wife Marion, who is not Jewish, and whose great beauty and dignity on stage have made her unassailable, attends to his needs. At the same time she takes charge of the theater, appeases a collaborationist newspaper critic whose judgment has become suddenly important, acquires a leading man, Bernard Granger, for her new production, and helps Steiner to direct the play in secret, by means of an auditor's channel from stage to basement through which he hears every line of the company's rehearsals. Bernard and Marion fall in love, but both remain essentially loyal to Steiner, and at the end, after the war but still on stage, all three are seen reunited.

With its serious portrait of artists at work, *The Last Metro* makes good on the promise of *Day for Night*. In neither film does the drama rehearsed by the actors comment unexpectedly on the story that Truffaut tells: but war, and especially war for the people of an occupied city, opens up vast areas of possible deception, and in every life forges a link between deception and survival, so that acting becomes almost as important as action. This circumstance gives *The Last Metro* its depth. The group around Steiner's theater find that what were

once practical or professional decisions have now taken on moral significance. Yet their conduct remains to them a matter of adjusting to the daily circumstance—not of bringing their whole lives into accord with the outcome of systematic reflection. Truffaut wants us to accept his film with the same tact, as a record of people in a particular situation, and not as an effort to come to terms with a great historical subject. Such fidelity to the given is supposed to be a strength for all works not written *à thèse*, but in fact it disappoints a large part of the intellectual audience; and when they find it, in any but a thoroughly brutal and somehow “out-of-bounds” film like *Seven Beauties*, they wonder why their history cannot be moralized. Why are we not shown Nazis, Jews, and traitors, in sufficiently impressive numbers, doing and suffering as the records tell us they did?

The answer in this instance is that Truffaut's setting is not all Paris but a certain theater; that his characters are not representative Nazis, Jews, or Parisians, but the friends and enemies of the theater; that his subject is not the Occupation, or the Holocaust, but a time when for these people the realities of ambition and performance were modified by the realities of betrayal and arrest. Truffaut makes us regard life in such conditions as a naturally moral subject, without satisfying us that its moments were therefore uniformly momentous. His seems to me the Tolstoyan feeling about crisis, and about the common gifts by which we survive it—deplorable perhaps, but helpful to a storyteller.

This film offers nothing of the sound propaganda of retrospect. To guard against that, it even has the texture of a '40s studio melodrama—something the ordinary viewer likes, though again our moralists are troubled by it. “That's not what the war looked like,” they can say, fortified by open-air adventures with expensive cinematography. But the language we recognize as true to life

is never the same as the language we recognize as true for art: the latter depends entirely on which conventions get to us first. In this sense there was nothing paradoxical about Wilde's remark that "The nineteenth century, as we know it, is largely an invention of Balzac." Similarly, for those whose knowledge is neither first-hand nor from books, World War II was largely an invention of *Casablanca*, *Five Graves to Cairo*, and the countless other films about principled opportunists who salvage an outpost of resistance here and there. *The Last Metro* borrows the routine imagery of the genre, in which a swastika on a flag or an armband, or even an exceptionally well-shined pair of boots, is enough to put our sympathies where they belong. Truffaut thus keeps the melodramatic contract, for the sake of a style the audience identifies with the authentic tone of a period. All these commonplace devices, however, he employs for his own ends, and *The Last Metro* is attached to its parent films both in homage and as an act of criticism. It educates the viewer whose ideal film is *Casablanca* and brings him, by an unemphatic irony, by pauses and deflections, a degree closer to the viewer whose ideal film is *Jules and Jim*.

Our education begins with Truffaut's willingness to grant a human complexity to the heroine. Marion Steiner is built after a recognizable type, the good and forbearing wife who mans the fort in hard times, and can draw on mysterious reserves in doing so: when the rifle-butt raps on the door, she alone will stop her husband from giving up. But Truffaut shows Marion Steiner taxed beyond her reserves, and, while we ponder the strangeness of this, manages to suggest that her vagrant passions are not just a release from the fears of the moment but an extension of her ordinary self. Out for an evening with her friends, she dashes off with a man she picked up a moment before, at a cabaret frequented by German officers. Her honor having been insulted by a review, and then gallantly defended by Bernard, she slaps him in the face because his show of valor might be read as a defiance of the Nazis. Not long after she will make love to him on the floor of his dressing room. These gestures are familiar at first, from the women of Truffaut's earlier films. But here the gestures are deepened by all that we see of Marion's relationship to Lucas Steiner; how she stands by him, with an intellectual admiration and moral respect that are as great as love, but not the same as love; how the impatience with which he receives her smallest kindness, the artist's egotism that he nurses the more irritably for his isolation, add to

her burden and estrange her affections in a way she can never reveal to anyone. The choice of Catherine Deneuve to play Marion Steiner was a bold piece of casting, and its success is a finer thing than the success of innumerable warm-hearted adepts in kindred roles.

BUT THE DRAMATIC ENERGIES of *The Last Metro* center on a character whom we see only a few times, Lucas Steiner. A sentimental portrait of a Jew would have ruined the film; too disenchanted a portrait of an artist, in which vanity predominated over genius, would have ruined it twice; but Truffaut, by a conspiracy of intelligence with his lead actor, Heinz Benent, persuades us of Steiner's genius and of his pride as an *individual* Jew, till these facts seem wrought into the very lines of his face. Even as a victim, however, we do not altogether love him or forgive his manner. There is something in him, apart from his strength of endurance, that warns us away. He is fussy, touchy, but masculine, completely intent on his art, and undeterred by anything that may stand in its way; not war, not his dearest friend, dare trouble his labors, on pain of suffering his immediate indifference or his death, an equally satisfactory revenge. This is the first Jew I can remember from a war picture who does not seem a tissue of humanitarian slogans animated by one actor's faith; he could have been conceived only by a sympathy as vivid and assured as Truffaut's, and a humanity so full that it needs no proof. By effortless imaginings Truffaut was freed for the work of a psychologist. He shows, for example, how the infection of anti-Semitism leaves its mark even on Steiner, whose marriage to a beautiful Frenchwoman has become part of his secret pride as well as his suffering: in certain moods, just like his persecutors, he regards his possession of Marion as a kind of theft. But he is a man who never draws very near the brink of self-pity—his self-knowledge is too great for that—and the result is that he seems to ask of us not pity but understanding. The most interesting moment in the film is one of Marion's visits to the cellar, when she discovers Steiner putting on a false nose and peering into a closet-mirror, because, he says, after all this time he wants to see what it feels like to be a Jew. As he does so, he looks neither mischievous nor ironic, but thoughtful, curious, scientific, as an artist is.

The one obvious defect of the plot has to do with the character of Steiner's art. Evidently he belongs to the high theatrical milieu in which Cocteau and Giraudoux were preeminent; during the war his wife produces—and surely, was con-

strained to produce—an inoffensive melodrama, while below-board he plans sets for a version of *The Magic Mountain*; yet even after the liberation, what he appears to have done is still another melodrama. One feels a little cheated by this. But then a different reaction sets in: one starts to think about the choices that faced Truffaut, and to see the very circumscribed idea he gives of Steiner's practice as a triumph of modesty and cunning. After all, genius gives a poor idea of genius, when the effort is really made. The novelist whose hero is a great poet has to write his great poems; and the director of films portraying a director of plays has to answer for the truth, substance, and originality of two separate productions. In the circumstances it may be better to aim for less—simply to establish that the imagined artist's work is there, and to exhibit the effect it has on others. This Truffaut does brilliantly, with a minimum of strain. Besides, he gives Steiner an impressive scene that has implications for his art, and in which he upsets the melodrama of everyday life. It happens near the end of the story. The Gestapo have begun to search the theater from top to bottom; and in his basement room, swept clear of furniture and all other signs of habitation, Steiner is caught in a familiar dramatic posture, concealed behind a partition with his wife's lover. When the Nazis have gone away with Marion and the two men are alone, Steiner turns to Bernard, and we expect any number of plausible gambits; but what he says is, "My wife loves you. Do you love her?" After a quiet second or two, Truffaut cuts to something else.

A further touch of modesty, which becomes tremendously moving as one thinks about it, is *The Last Metro's* treatment of Jews. Steiner is of course a special case. But what of the thousand nameless ones, whom we feel it a crime to ignore now that their story is known? Plainly they do not belong to Truffaut's story. It would once have been possible to watch a film of this sort without minding the omission; and even now, for Truffaut to have given them a subplot would have robbed his film of all conviction. But he was inventing almost two generations after the event, and knew that though we do not think of them often, and will hardly condemn ourselves for failing to do so, we cannot help feeling that when associated subjects are before us *this* had better not be evaded. His solution is to place Jews at the outer edge of the story, and of the camera's interest—to make sure nevertheless that we know who they are—and then leave us to our thoughts. Thus our first

knowledge of Marion Steiner comes from an overheard conversation, in which she refuses work to a Jew, the more efficiently to protect one Jew. Later she is confronted by a girl of fifteen, already bent on pursuing a career in the theater and eager to attend the new play—but forbidden as a Jew. To her plea for special treatment Marion gives an equivocal answer, but we see the girl a second time, in the audience, her yellow star artfully covered by a sash. That, by my count, is in the year 1942, and that is all; Truffaut leaves her there; we know her probable fate and nothing would be gained by reporting it. What would be lost is a curious outrush of interest and sympathy, which, because it had no prompting, seems as we feel it to be our own.

TRUFFAUT ENDS HIS FILM in the most perfect way imaginable, but here he seems to have been widely misconstrued; and I think the details are worth recalling, to illustrate what pains he took in guiding the interpretation he wanted. We are first shown newsreel-footage of the liberation, with a rapid summary of the fate of every minor character. All this part, down to the narrator's tone of voice, is strongly reminiscent of *Jules and Jim*. Before the narrator breaks the interruption with his "Back to our story," we see Steiner creeping along a stone wall in a by-alley, dodging machine-gun bullets: just what became of him there is left uncertain. The story when we return to it has Marion visiting Bernard in a hospital; he is seriously wounded, but on the way to recovery, and she again declares her love; he rebuffs her completely, saying that he never has loved her, and never can; but, as she leaves the room, we see his face averted, and realize that he has told a lie for Steiner's sake. The question now becomes, will Marion go back to her husband? But a curtain goes down on the whole scene. It was a play after all, Steiner's first great success after the war, starring Marion and Bernard. Marion receives the applause, first hesitantly, with a brief smile, then calmly, with a generous one, and joins hands with the two men.

Some people have thought this ambiguous, or found in it a suggestion that Marion is still divided between the two. Memories of *Jules and Jim* may have given the cue to the latter reading; but our authoritative cue is in the play itself. Marion has gone back to Steiner—has been sent back. Bernard has joined them for this production, as per-

(continued on page 494)

From R. H. Tawney's Commonplace Book

Introduction

In the early 1970s, I taught a course at Harvard on the moral arguments for capitalism and socialism. It was easy to find readings in defense of capitalism. The rights of entrepreneurs, contractual freedom, contribution and "desert" as the basis of reward: these were topics that had long interested philosophers and philosophically inclined economists. But I had real difficulty finding any serious philosophical defenses of, even statements of, socialist values. Marxist historicism long ago replaced moral philosophy among committed socialists. On one level, Marxism was a science; on another level, it was a tactics. And in the (connected) worlds of scientists and tacticians, any sort of moral reflectiveness became an object of disdain. It suggested a lack of confidence in historical development or an unwillingness to do what had to be done to help that development along.

In Anglo-American political life, moral argument survived most clearly among the Christian socialists, the greatest of whom was R. H. Tawney. By the time I finished putting my reading list together, I had decided that Tawney was also the most important socialist moralist of the 20th century. But Tawney was not a systematic philosopher, and his two best books, *The Acquisitive*

Society (1921) and *Equality* (1931) are so full of historical and contemporary reference, so wary of abstraction, that they have today a certain dated quality. Finely argued, with the rich irony that was Tawney's hallmark, they remain immensely moving and powerful tracts. It is difficult, however, to find in them a clear statement of basic principles. Tawney did produce such a statement, but only for himself—in a remarkable private diary and commonplace book that he kept in the years just before the First World War. Here he worked out his ideas (as the editors of the diary have written) with "a clarity and simplicity of style seldom equalled in his later work." Published a decade ago by Cambridge University Press, the diary was largely ignored. But it deserves close attention. It is a deeply personal account of the moral meaning of socialism, but it can serve equally well as a public statement, and it is as relevant today as it was 70 years ago.

When he began the diary, in 1912, Tawney was thirty-two years old, living in Manchester, teaching for the Workers' Educational Association. He had just finished his first book, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, and was thinking not only about what to do next, but about his life's work. And in the next two years, before he enlisted in the British army in 1914, he outlined the major books he was to write in the '20s and '30s. The ideas of a lifetime crystallized in these pages, from which we here present a few excerpts.

The excerpts, in the following pages, from R. H. Tawney's *Commonplace Book*, edited and with an introduction by J. M. Winter and D. M. Joslin, © copyright Economic Society 1972 and published by the Cambridge University Press in 1972, appear here with the kind permission of the publisher.

MICHAEL WALZER □

The industrial problem is a moral problem, a problem of learning as a community to reprobate certain courses of conduct and to approve others.* This, it may be said, is moonshine. But let us take a concrete example. Everyone in England today condemns slavery. Everyone in England would feel that a man who got his income from slaves was doing something disgraceful. Even when out of sight of civilization, a man would feel that to make money by trading in slaves or by employing slave labour, was a thing he could not do and hold up his head again. And this feeling against slavery, be it noted, is quite independent of whether a man treats his slaves kindly or not. However kind a slave owner might be—and he might be much kinder than many English businesses—he is condemned because he is outraging the deepest human sentiment, the sentiment which forbids a human being to be treated as a thing in law. Now one need not point out that though this sentiment is very ancient, its application is quite modern—in 1800 there were a great many people who saw no wrong in slavery. Why should not the same sentiment grow up towards the most characteristic immoralities of modern industry? If an average decent Englishman feels that it is a disgraceful thing to buy and sell human beings or to hold them as his property, why should he not feel that it is a disgraceful thing to exploit the labour of children, to take advantage of unorganized labour to beat down wages, to take large profits himself while his employers are housed like cattle? But it is not only the employer who is to blame. It is all of us. We see no wrong in taking dividends which are wrung out of the oppression of other people. Above all—and it comes back to this—we see no wrong in using other people not as human *personalities*, but as *tools*, not as *ends* but as *means*. But this of course is the essence of slavery. Is it not possible therefore for us to widen our conception of slavery from legal *rightlessness* to practical *helplessness*, from property in human beings to property in the labour of human beings, and to feel the

same moral abhorrence of the latter as we do of the former? This it seems to me is the fundamental question of the day. For what produces our social divisions is not mere poverty, but the consciousness of a moral wrong, an outrage on what is sacred in man. This is why thousands of men strike in order that justice may be done to a few, when they have everything to lose, and nothing to gain by striking.

ONE WHOLE WING of social reformers has gone, it seems to me, altogether astray. They are preoccupied with relieving distress, patching up failures, reclaiming the broken down. All this is good and necessary. But it is not the social problem, and it is not the policy which would ever commend itself to the working classes. What they want is security and opportunity, not assistance in the exceptional misfortunes of life, but a fair chance of leading an independent, fairly prosperous life, if they are not exceptionally unfortunate. It is no use giving opiates or stimulants to men whose daily regimen is unhealthy. It is no use devising relief schemes for a community where the normal relationships are felt to be unjust.

There is this difference between modern poverty and that of earlier ages. In the 16th century a man might be—according to modern standards—poor; but he might, nonetheless, be independent, in the sense of controlling the fundamental conditions of his own life. Today independence is an expensive luxury. To the mass of the people poverty means that the conditions of your work, and therefore of your life, are settled by someone else.

ALL DECENT PEOPLE are at heart conservatives, in the sense of desiring to conserve the human associations, loyalties, affections, pious bonds between man and man which express a man's personality and become at once a sheltering nest for his spirit and a kind of watchtower from which he may see visions of a more spacious and bountiful land. All decent people are against a creed which tries such things by the standard of "utility" as though there were any end of life except life itself. What makes the working classes revolutionary is that modern economic conditions are constantly passing a steam roller over these immaterial graces and pieties, breaking up homes, casting venerable men on to the scrap heap because they are "no good," using up children "for their immediate commercial utility," and all in the name of material progress, that cotton may be cheap! They want the state to

* Tawney taught a summer course at Leeds in June 1912 on "Some Strands of Modern Political Thought," which may have inspired these remarks. A year earlier, he had given a similar course at Oxford; see Russell L. Jones, "The Invasion of a University," *Highway*, III, no. 35 (Aug. 1911), p. 173: "Birkenhead, Birmingham and Swindon, Belfast, London and Longton, are at the moment grappling with R. H. Tawney upon the need for a unifying center for ethical precept."

step in and put down these lawless vandals who judge human affection[s] by their effect on the money-market. They want to “conserve” the home, the property, the family of the worker. They do not believe that progress consists in “changes which can be expressed in statistics.” No political creed will ever capture their hearts which begins by saying simply “We will give you a little more money. We will still measure success by the old standards. But we will let you have more of it.” What is noble in the Labour movement is precisely this, that when a man does sacrifice personal success—as many workmen do—to a cause, they do not think him a quixotic fool. They recognize that his creed is really their creed—and yet, how tragic is the cynicism which one often finds among them, cynicism expressed in the question “What are you getting out of it?” They have seen human souls sacrificed so often to money that they have ceased to believe in any other motive except personal gain.

What is needed for the improvement of society is not so much that men should have profound information as to the possible result of their actions, but that they should have a keen sense of right and wrong, that they should realize that the conceptions “right and wrong” apply to *all* relations of life, including those where their application is most inconvenient, such as those of business, and that they should act on their knowledge. More knowledge [?we’ll] certainly need. But what we need still more is the disposition to act on the knowledge which we possess; and I am disposed to complain with regard to sociologists generally that they concentrate attention on remote consequences instead of on immediate duties, that they substitute inexpediency for sin and social welfare for conscience, and that then the world instead of feeling that it is a miserable sinner, flying from the city of Destruction, escapes its responsibilities today by speculating on the probabilities of the future.

Now I do not complain of all this intellectual activity being applied to tracing out social actions and reactions. What I do want to drive home is that our conduct in particular cases is, and must always be, very largely independent of it, and that therefore the first step towards an improvement in social life is to judge our social conduct by strict moral standards. I venture to say—though it sounds a heresy—that there [are] certain sorts of

behaviour which we know to be right, and certain others which we know to be wrong. Let us act on what we know. We know it to be wrong for a man to live as though the effects of his actions upon his neighbours did not concern him. We know it to be wrong for one man to deceive another in order that thereby he may obtain pecuniary advantage. We know it to be wrong for one man to take advantage of the weakness of another in order to wring out of him terms to which he would not submit if he were a free agent. This knowledge is, I would urge, the common property of Christian nations. If it is asked, on what it is based, I answer that it is based on the experience of life in all the principal nations of Western Europe, and that its validity is shown by the fact that when these propositions are stated in a general form, nobody in practice would venture to deny them. Not only so, nobody, in practice, would think it necessary to appeal to the consequences of neglecting them in order to prove their validity, though it is, I suppose, on the consequences of neglecting them that their validity ultimately rests. Very well then—what is the task of the sociologist? It is [I] submit to show how these universally accepted principles may be applied to particular sets of social conditions. It is in fact analogous to the business of a jurist. A jurist builds up the body of laws, by bringing new cases, as they arise, under some of the general principles of his science. A sociologist ought to build up his science by bringing new economic cases under some of the rules of conduct generally accepted by civilized men. This does not appear to me to be done at the present time. What is happening is that there is great activity in investigation both inductive and deductive (—to use bad words—). But that the new facts are largely useless so far as conduct is concerned, because they are not grouped under the established principles by [which] most men admit that their conduct should be controlled. Let me take one or two examples: What were the reasons for the abolition of slavery? (I have no special knowledge on this point and must look it up.) They were, I suppose, that a body of opinion which arose [and] which held that the employment of one man by another as a tool was immoral, and that this body of opinion became sufficiently powerful to convert the majority of persons, who had never realized that slavery implied this, and those who, if they realized it, had never made in their minds the connection between this fact and any accepted principle of morality, in such a way as to reveal to

them that the fact and the principle were inconsistent. The reason for the abolition of slavery was certainly not that after calculation the advocates of the change arrived at the conclusion that its abolition was more profitable than its maintenance. They acted as they did because they believed slavery to be *wrong*, and believing it to be wrong determined to get rid of it irrespective of whether the result would diminish or increased [*sic*]*—it actually increased—the productive capacity of the slave or the profits of the quondam slave-owner.*

Now let us turn from this example to another. Everyone at the present day knows a large number of persons are paid wages which make it extremely difficult to live virtuous lives. They are tempted to neglect their duties to their families because it's so hopeless to discharge them, or to be mean for fear of neglecting them, or to be quite casual because they will not be mean, according to their temperament. In practice the vices of slave labour tend to appear among them. They feel they are treated unjustly: they have no prospects; and the employer tries to make up for the absence of other incentives by close supervision. We are, in fact, as I am inclined to say, faced with a problem analogous to, though different from, that which confronted the Abolitionists.

How far is it possible for us to approach it in the same spirit?

The supreme evil of modern industrial society is not poverty. *It is the absence of liberty*, i.e. of the opportunity for self-direction: and for controlling the material conditions of a man's life. This produces poverty, because it produces hopelessness, irresponsibility, recklessness. That is the lesson of the industrial revolution and of the enclosures. To give men the *will* not to be poor, we must first of all give them the *control of the material conditions* on which their lives depend, that is set them free.

What I want to drive home is this, that the man who employs, governs, to the extent of the number of men employed. He has jurisdiction over them. He occupies what is really a public office. He has power, not of pit and gallows, and infantheof [*infangthief*] and outfantheof [*outfangthief*], but of overtime and short time, full bellies and empty bellies, health and sickness. The question *who* has this power, how is he qualified to use [*it*], how does the state control his liberties, how far it makes the

kings' writ run inside his franchise, this is the question which really matters to the plain man today. And this power is at present possessed and exercised quite at haphazard. Anyone may wield it who can command sufficient capital. We insist on our civil servants having certain qualifications. Diplomats must have good manners and understand French. But there is no provision that our employers shall understand the language of the people they govern, and as for manners!

The line which intellectual socialism has hitherto followed in England has been collectivist, not communist. It has concentrated on state regulation—the policy of the national minimum. It has almost surrendered the policy of communal ownership and use, except with regard to certain local services which offer, when in private hands, special opportunities of fleecing the consumer. Now this policy increases the well-being of the classes who are protected, and I have no positive objection to it. But it does not touch the problem of inequality based on economic privilege which is, I think, even more than poverty, the great blot on modern society. I do not see how that can be attacked except by a large transference of property rights, by the adoption of the principle that economic “rent” is not to be left in private hands, and that there shall be sufficient equality of opportunity to prevent the maintenance of “plum” posts where payments are high because entrants are artificially made and kept scarce. What I mean is (a) the municipalization of urban land and the regular purchase of land by the state (b) the purchase of coal-mines and railways and licensed houses (c) the creation of a really democratic system of higher education (d) heavy taxes on incomes from property.

What I don't see is any sign of a force making for these changes. They are certainly what the working classes mean by socialism. But then 9/10 of them have not got to the point of realizing that our present (though not all) inequalities are the creation of man not of God. The middle-class reformer is either (a) moved by pity of the poor and merely anxious to relieve their sufferings (b) interested in “tidying up” regulations, organization etc (c) convinced that principles are valueless and only a fool looks more than 12 months ahead. The fact is that what we want is a restatement of principles. □

Irving Howe

On the Moral Basis of Socialism

The following text was delivered as a talk at the convention of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee in the spring of 1981.—Eds.

In a luminous sketch the Italian writer Ignazio Silone recalls an incident from his childhood. He once saw “a small, barefoot, ragged little man” being dragged down the streets of his village. “Look how funny he is,” the boy said to his father.

My father looked severely at me, dragging me to my feet and led me to his room. I had never seen him so angry. . . .

“What have I done wrong?” I asked him. . . .

“Never make fun of a man who’s been arrested. Never!”

“Why not?”

“Because he can’t defend himself. And because he may be innocent. In any case, because he’s unhappy.”

This anecdote yields a moral perspective that sustains a politics of socialism. We are asked to concern ourselves with the victim through an act of imaginative relation. We are instructed tacitly in the oppressive weight of power. We are incited to the values of skepticism and sympathy, the two responses that, together, form the basis for whatever remains of civilization in the 20th century.

Without invoking God or religion, though these may nevertheless lie behind it, Silone’s story affirms the essence of moral response: a lively awareness of what the other needs and how the other feels. Silone’s anecdote thus has its evident ties with the Kantian view that each man, as a rational moral agent, is owed respect simply as a man—and, adds Bernard Williams, “since men are equally such agents, [this respect] is owed equally to all, unlike admiration and similar attitudes, which are commanded unequally by men in proportion to their unequal possession of different kinds of natural excellence.” The respect put forward in Kantian theory is a kind of secular analogue to the Christian conception of what is owed equally to all men as children of God.

This view of man lies somewhere at the basis of our desire for a socialist society, though of course it is by no means confined to socialists nor does it constitute, by itself, a sufficient argument for such a society. Turn to the work of Adam Smith, in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and you will find there an empirical equivalent to the view that something is owed all men because they are children of God:

Though our brother is on the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. . . . It is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. . . . By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body. . . .

Smith was hardly so naive as to suppose the workings of imagination that lead to active sympathy must always result in the removal or amelioration of suffering. But insofar as suffering is eased, it is in part through “entering as it were” into the body of the sufferer. Smith is trying to answer a question far more difficult than: why do we claim moral value for one or another political idea? He is trying to answer the question: why should we care or exert ourselves for the good in human affairs? Why respond to anything but self-interest narrowly perceived as greed or privilege?

Few systems of moral or political belief—finally, perhaps none at all—have simply asserted that power is its own justification for being. The need for claiming that our interests or schemes have some objective value seems all but universal. And that need for self-justification produces, of course, a large appetite for self-delusion. Still, there are traditional modes of argument in behalf of caring and exerting oneself for the public good. We speak of imaginative sympathy as a ground of moral life. We speak of enlightened self-interest: since man has no choice but to live as a social animal, he can make his existence tolerable only through some codes of community and order. Or we say that the good comes to us as a mandate

from God—though this hardly relieves us of the irksome need to interpret His commandments, which means to take responsibility for our own moral life.

TOWARD THE WHOLE complex tradition of moral speculation, Marxists have tended to be ambivalent, reductive, and dismissive. They have often denied or minimized the moral argument for socialism, disparaging it as sentimental or ahistorical; they have stressed the claim that in the age of developed capitalism, as it makes possible a life of plenty, the movement toward socialism arises from an inner dynamic of history, with the working class assigned the historical mission of abolishing both class exploitation and itself. But is not the idea of a “mission” perhaps a way of smuggling in the very moral imperative that the history-obsessed Marxists have tried to banish?

To see the movement toward socialism as inherent in the historical process was an attempt to escape the utopian fantasies of the past and to grasp the hard instruments of power. But in truth Marxists have never been quite able to abide by this submission to the impersonal workings of the historical process. Somewhere in Marxism there is buried an infatuation with Justice. There is intense moral indignation in Marx’s *Capital* that cannot quite be reconciled with his claim to be a mere scientist charting the course of capitalist economy. It is, oddly enough, in Lenin that one can see most sharply the contradiction between the claim to historical objectivity and the energies of moral passion. He writes that “Marxism contains no shred of ethics from beginning to end”; but he also invokes “the revolutionary consciousness of Justice,” which, capitalized or not, surely must contain at least a shred of ethics; and he tells us also that “Men liberated from capitalist exploitation will gradually become accustomed to abide by the elementary rules of social life known from time immemorial”—which sounds suspiciously like a relativist casting a warm eye at rudimentary absolutes.

Even when it was possible to believe—it is hard today—that the impersonal processes of history lead to socialism, the socialist leaders still had to account for their own behavior. Few were of proletarian origin, few acted out of direct class needs, and most were inspired by moral visions their ideology sometimes inhibited them from expressing. It was Adam Smith’s “sympathy” and “imagination” that stirred them—it was the poetry of socialism, by now a little worn, and not the

economics, by now a little worn out. Indeed, the very conception of a “vanguard party” advanced by Lenin—few ideas have done more damage to the cause of socialism—can also be seen as a smuggling into politics of a moral intent, the conscious activity of a selfless elite, though without the scrupulous self-criticism that should always accompany claims for a moral ideal.

Today we are likely to suppose that the case for socialism, no longer planted very firmly in the “dialectic of history,” must be made increasingly on moral grounds: — that the extension of democracy to the workplace is a desirable fulfillment of the claim for political freedom, that extreme inequality in socioeconomic status thwarts genuine liberty, that the fulfillment of the human personality requires a setting of cooperativeness and fraternity. Is this argument, however, distinctive to socialists? May not liberals also claim that they want to realize the moral goals socialists invoke?

If there is one point of crucial difference, it has to do not with political freedoms and personal fulfillments but with equality. The egalitarian bias is stronger among us than among our liberal friends, though I cannot here go into the reasons for this bias. Yet one can sympathize with the view of Jean Jaurès, the French socialist leader of 75 years ago, that democratic socialism should be seen as, finally, the fulfillment of the ideals of the French Revolution:

Only socialism will give the Declaration of the Rights of Man its entire meaning. Revolutionary bourgeois law has freed the human personality from many shackles. But it forces new generations to pay a duty on the capital accumulated by their predecessors. . . . We, on the contrary, claim that all the means of production . . . must be put at the disposal of all human activities and help to make them free.

WE ARE APPROACHING dangerous reefs: the reefs of righteousness and moralism, the supposition that merely being a socialist somehow betokens moral virtue. I think here of a comic version, the once-famous remark of James P. Cannon, leader of the American Trotskyists, that they were “the only moral people.” Since they numbered some 1200, that put the moral condition of the U.S. in even greater jeopardy than some of us had already supposed.

To assert that a commitment to socialism somehow entails moral virtue is to risk collective arrogance, which, in breeding fanaticism, is far

more dangerous than individual arrogance. And when socialist groups are small, there is a special temptation to fall back upon moral posture: we are powerless, ergo, we must be good. It might, after all, mean we are wrong.

The moral value of a political position must always be tested anew. It rests much more with immediate, particular consequences than with cloudy, ultimate ends. Socialism must always in some sense be a Utopia, that is, an envisioned good society enabling and guiding our conduct of the moment; but it withers into lifelessness, and can even be a menace to freedom, if allowed to become an absolute in the name of which anything may be justified or nothing done. The vision of the good society enlarges moral life insofar as, through the very grandeur of its claims, it reinforces small actions.

Some of the points I am struggling with were brilliantly illuminated 40 years ago in a debate between Leon Trotsky and John Dewey. Trotsky had invoked as the basis for judging actions of revolutionists the furthering of the cause of socialism, while Dewey argued that the Bolsheviks, in invoking the "ultimate end" of socialism, allowed themselves too readily to use means for which there was neither immediate need nor probable justification. What matters in the choice of means is not just the large proclaimed end, almost always some attractive idea like socialism or democracy, but the probable consequence, the *next* likely end in the chain of means and ends. Dewey distinguished between two common uses of the term "end" in the endless discussions about "means and ends"—"the final justifying end and ends that are themselves means to this final end." What has given a bad name to the maxim that "the end justifies the means," wrote Dewey, is that "the ['final justifying end' or as we would say, socialism] is commonly employed so that it is not necessary to examine what the actual consequences of the use of chosen means will be." The point is decisive.

THERE ARE other difficulties. A major one is that no portraiture of the good society can be of much consequence unless it is interwoven with and enables a politics that has at least *some* possibility of realization. Otherwise we can only say—and this must be a haunting specter for American socialists—that we share certain moral sentiments displayed in our vision of the good society but that we do not have any likely avenues of historical fulfillment. A moral sentiment may be admirable but it does not, by itself, constitute a sufficient politics.

When in fact we examine the record of socialism, we find that it is precisely in the realm of proposals for its enactment that it has suffered from terrible vagueness and been forced to make major retreats. An intellectual scandal has been its paucity of thought regarding the structural workings of socialist society: most Marxists, in fact, have not thought it worth the trouble. And meanwhile socialists are no longer nearly so confident as once we were about the value of nationalization of industries; we become increasingly doubtful about the efficacy of centralized planning; we begin to speak about "market socialism" as if to verge on the heresy of a mixed economy; we question whether the dialectic of history will, on its own, deposit us in the sunshine of socialism.

As a result, the socialist movement has lived in recent years with a schizoid division between a posture of moral rectitude, usually indulged when things were going badly or the troops had to be rallied or practical proposals seemed scarce, and an immediacy of pragmatism, usually indulged when there was a small chance for little changes.

Still more, we must confront the possibility urged by critics that between our animating moral sentiments, lovely as these may be, and our political-social proposals there are deep conflicts. It would be foolish to deny that the events of this century, especially in the lands of Communist totalitarianism, force us to take seriously at least two arguments of our opponents:

1. *That the effort to construct a socialist society must necessarily entail a large amount of bureaucratic centralization, which, in turn, means the danger of authoritarianism.* Have we not, explicitly or tacitly, granted at least some force to this argument? Do we not recognize that a completely nationalized economy, insofar as it places a fearful power in the hands of the state, contains a probable thrust toward authoritarianism? That is why we have moved away from statist visions of socialism to stress decentralization, political freedom, workers' control of production—the last would become especially important if we could ever determine what we mean by it.
2. *That there is an inescapable conflict between liberty and equality, which the effort to build socialism would excite in deplorable ways.* Allow sufficient liberty and society must turn increasingly inequalitarian; try to enforce equality in stringent ways and you do so at the cost of liberty. There is,

we now recognize, “something” to this, and thereby our vision of socialism becomes “less perfect” but perhaps better.

Surely if we *had* to choose between liberty and equality, we socialists would choose liberty; first because we regard it as the very medium of civilized life, and second, because we know that with liberty it is possible to struggle for greater equality, while in the absence of liberty, as we see in Russia, China, and Cuba, the only kind of egalitarianism is one imposed by an authoritarian elite, which is to say, no egalitarianism at all.

Socialists have some strong counterarguments. Michael Walzer has nicely remarked that

What is necessary is that everyone . . . be able to say yes or no. Without liberty, there could be no rightful distribution [of goods] at all. On the other hand, men are not free, not politically free at least, if *his* yes,

because of his birth or place or fortune, counts seventeen times more heavily than *my* no. Here the case is exactly as socialists have always claimed . . . : liberty and equality are the two chief virtues of social institutions and they stand best when they stand together.

The transformations of modern society prompt us to ground the case for socialism more strongly than ever in moral claims. Precisely our strong reasons for doing this may constitute—at least if one has some skepticism about the human enterprise—strong reasons for being cautious, modest, self-critical in our moral assertions. We want to link the guiding ideal with the immediate purpose, but to invoke the need for doing so is not the same as doing it. Perhaps there is only one way of minimizing our mistakes, and that is to see democracy, the freedom embodying our moral values, as the foundation of all we do, all we want, all we are. □

MOVIES

(continued from page 486)

haps he will in the future for others. The love Marion and Bernard knew, however, belongs for both to an inadmissible past. Between Marion and Steiner, their bond of endurance has become so fast that even Bernard, were he given the chance, would prefer not to break it, and rather say that his love never existed. What does remain ambiguous is the sensation we feel in recognizing all this. For each character has renounced something: Bernard, a woman he loved; Marion, the belief that she was loved; nor is Steiner exempted, having heard the rehearsals from his little room and spoken his question to Bernard. A very temperate and unenchanted realism pervades these final moments, for all their theatrical magic. And the same is true of our final view of Daxiat, the right-wing journalistic hack, coarse, bullying, and pathetic, whom a new system raised for a while to

the power of cultural arbiter. He has been the most memorable of all the minor characters, and Truffaut's documentary summary contains a glimpse of him in flight from the guns of the resistance. How will he end? The straight melodramatic convention dictates that he be tried as a collaborator and found guilty. A more cynical modern ending would leave him a millionaire after the war. But these are the cheap rewards of a genre in its pure state, and again Truffaut's polite refusal is characteristic. His narrator tells us that Daxiat went on to an ordinary life and died of cancer. That small surprise of the genuine was available to *The Last Metro* because from the first it was no less conscious of history than it was of the history of an art. Truffaut looks on both only as irrefutable premises, and his love of chance proclaims his love of truth. □

Carol O'Cleireacain

Economic Policy for the 1980s?

THE ZERO-SUM SOCIETY, by Lester Thurow. New York: Basic Books. 230 pp. Cloth, \$12.95; paper, New York: Penguin, \$4.95.

ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY, by Martin Carnoy and Derek Shearer. White Plains, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe. 436 pp. Cloth, \$15.00; paper, \$7.95.

An interesting poll done for the New York Stock Exchange by Garth, Friedman, and Morris last December (after the election) reveals that 61 percent of the American people believe the U.S. economy is in a crisis. They are right. Evidence of the system's failure to solve its problems over a long period of time is not hard to muster. In the decade of the 1970s, the lowest unemployment rate was, in 1973, 4.3 percent. Every year of the decade, except 1974, saw the duration of unemployment in double digits for more than 10 weeks. (See Tables B31-32 in *The Economic Report of the President*.) Using an average unemployment rate of 6 percent for the decade and an average duration of unemployment of 12 weeks, about 6 million people were unemployed for an average of one-quarter of a year, up to 24 million people annually. That's a measure of the extent to which unemployment can tap a worker on the shoulder and say, "It's your turn, buddy." Thus workers are participating in a society where there is a high degree of risk and uncertainty.

If we look at prices, we see the same kind of uncertainty. The 1967 dollar now is worth less than 35 cents. Such changes in prices used to occur over much longer periods of time, say in the period from World War I to the 1950s. In general, though, the people who worry about this problem are a different group from those who worry about the uncertainty of becoming unemployed. As Thurow demonstrates, "inflation seems to have had little, if any, impact on the distribution of income" between rich and poor. However, "the

distribution of net worth [wealth] has become more equal, because the stock market has fallen. Since the richer you are the larger corporate stock looms as a fraction of your portfolio, the richer you are the greater your losses. . . ." In addition, of course, the banking community often suffers in periods of inflation. No wonder then that bankers lobby hard for increases in usury ceilings.

Policy-makers used to be able to make at least one group happy; Keynesian policy allowed for a trade-off between inflation and unemployment. Now we can't even do that, and it is the most visible aspect of the economic policy crisis. Evidence shows that the public is aware of this. In the New York Stock Exchange poll, 54 percent generally blamed the government for "failing to understand or control economic problems."

Why is there a macro-policy crisis? The short answer is that developments since the end of World War II have led to increased interdependency of various national economies, with even large continental economies like that of the United States becoming far more open to movements of factors of production and goods and services. In the U.S., in a little more than a decade, foreign trade has risen from 4 percent to almost 12 percent of GNP. Using a multiplier of two, this means that about one-fifth to one-quarter of America's workers depend on foreigners for their jobs.

This and major demographic and technological changes have affected U.S. economic policy in two important ways.

- First, monetary policy is increasingly out of control. The Federal Reserve cannot know quickly enough when changes in the monetary base take place nor use open-market operations to fully offset the effects. There are too many alternative forms of money and too many places to borrow internationally. With the U.S. trying to run both the world economy (through the reserve role of the dollar) and its own domestic economy, the increased “openness” of the economic system has made attempts to use monetary policy to significantly improve domestic inflation or unemployment bound to fail.

- Second, fiscal policy, unlike monetary policy, is used to meet social needs—that’s what a government budget is all about. There is a growing conflict between the use of government spending in order to stabilize the economy and the need to provide basic services, such as schools, health, security, and mass transit. In order to understand this conflict, one need only look at the recent policy debate on the federal budget, with its tremendous repercussions on state and local budgets.

While old policies and old institutions are increasingly unable to cope with new, changed conditions, we have yet to develop a consensus on the new institutions and policies. These uncertainties lead to further frustration and confusion over what should be done. There is so much confusion that (as the New York Stock Exchange survey showed) 93 percent of the American public is willing to accept the Reagan economic program *even if they personally do not agree with it*. And 42 percent of the public said they would be willing to stick it out four years even if the economy does not improve! People will only display such willingness to walk into a wall if they feel there are no other options.

BOTH THESE BOOKS were written for those who know that past economic policies no longer work. However, their tone, their approaches, their aims, and the audiences they address are quite different. At an early point the reader sees Thurow as a pessimist who gives an excellent analysis of what has failed. *The Zero Sum Society* offers a cogent autopsy of the Carter administration’s economic policy. Underlying Thurow’s suggestions for ways out of the policy crisis is a general tone expressing doubt that these suggestions will in fact be implemented. Carnoy and Shearer, on the other hand, write with optimism about the eventual development of certain social democratic institutions and policies.

These different approaches stem, at least in part, from the different audiences the authors are trying to reach. Thurow is writing for the economic policy-making elite—aiming to convince them to look in other directions. His emphasis is on the broad policy picture as seen from Washington. He paints the structure of the economy with a broad brush, and such issues as whether workers should own or run Inland Steel are not viewed in his book as focal points of economic policy. Carnoy and Shearer, on the other hand, are writing largely for community activists—aiming to present an agenda for changing policy priorities. For such readers, the role of Washington and Washington’s policy concerns are minor compared to grass-roots issues around which people can organize in order to have more control over their work and living conditions.

Although they focus on different aspects of the economic policy crisis, the two books agree that American economic policy has failed to address the issue of redistribution. Thurow demonstrates that issues of income redistribution are fundamental to the macro-unemployment/inflation policy dilemma. He also demonstrates the redistributive impact of a variety of other aspects of economic policy, such as the pricing of energy sources and the design of environmental regulation. Carnoy and Shearer focus on the redistribution of control over work and production. Central to each book is the relationship between democracy as it has come to be practiced in postwar America and the economic system in which people live and work. Both books acknowledge that the troubles of the U.S. economy are not unique; both look to other democratic countries around the world for examples of how to get around the liberal policy paralysis. Such an approach is in sharp contrast to the prevailing theme of neoconservatives who look backward to less complex days. Both books recognize that other countries have traveled similar, though not identical, paths in their economic development and that there may be something out there worth learning.

THUROW’S *The Zero-Sum Society* is a pleasure to read. In a profession heavily populated by narrow specialists who rarely venture into plain English, Lester Thurow stands out as a model political economist, able to be understood by everyone. His analysis here is, as usual, original, eclectic, and somewhat iconoclastic.

His book’s central theme is expressed in the title, taken from modern game theory: what I

win, you lose. Zero-sum games are the most interesting and the ones whose outcomes are impossible to predict. But in Thurow's view the main problem is the inability of the political system to cope with the zero-sum nature of modern economic policy. It cannot cope, because a trade-off has developed between economic growth and economic security. These are, according to Thurow, "mutually incompatible. Everyone wants both, but everyone cannot have both." Hence, policy paralysis.

Thurow's solution to the paralysis is to develop what I would call an agreed-upon "social compact," in the form of an explicit income distribution decision. He presents four major equity decisions:

- [1] What is the minimum economic floor to which you would let any individual or family sink regardless of the cause of their failure?
- [2] What is to be the distribution of economic rewards for those that participate in the economy?
- [3] How should [the tax] burden be distributed?
- [4] What compensatory payments should be made when public policies cause large income losses?

Thurow's answers to these questions reflect both his sense of justice and his analysis of how the modern American economy functions. To the first question, his reply is that no one's income should be less than "half as large as [that of] the average American," reflecting the reality that pay rates, and therefore one's sense of justice, are determined on a *relative*, not an absolute, basis. Regarding the second, he observes that "the structure of reward that now exists for fully employed white males" is a spread of about 5:1 from top to bottom. This reflects his excellent analysis of employment discrimination, which generates much greater inequality in earnings. To the third question he replies that, if the appropriate distribution has been achieved—that is, (1) and (2) above are satisfied—a proportional tax system is adequate; but as long as there is greater inequality, progressive taxes are needed. His answer to the fourth question is that we need "a generous system of transitional aid to individuals but not firms." This last answer stems from the central element of Thurow's analysis: policy should encourage and reward change and flexibility, recognizing the individual's need for security. Workers who have no guaranteed job/income security will fight plant closings, particularly in a less-than-full-employment economy. Workers who have no in-house job security will

not train new workers to be more efficient and possibly to knock them out of a job. Guaranteeing job security, along Japanese lines, offers, for Thurow, the real potential out of the policy paralysis.

Thurow notes that the American political structure does not lend itself to asking or answering any of these questions. No political party stands on a platform of explicit income distribution. Rather, American politicians attempt to play one group against another—Thurow calls this "the ultimate in proportional representation, where every elected official is a one-man political party." A large part of the book is spent demonstrating how the political process was unable to parcel out the economic losses implicit in such issues as energy pricing, inflation, pollution, and economic growth.

CARNOY AND SHEARER CONCENTRATE on the distribution of economic power. The theme of *Economic Democracy* is decentralized workers' control and how to achieve it. The book starts with the assumption that socialism is preferable to capitalism, and that Americans would demand a democratic form of socialism—that is, democratic planning, from the bottom up. The focus, then, becomes much more "micro" than Thurow's.

Carnoy and Shearer deal with the traditional components of economic democracy: control over capital; issues of workplace control, including technology; control over corporate power. They concentrate on presenting examples of attempts at economic democracy in each of these areas, both in the United States and abroad, in order to draw some general policy lessons from both the more and the less successful attempts. The presentation of all these cases in one place indeed is a major contribution.

But the authors are aiming for more than a cataloguing of examples of democratic control over economic decisions: they are seeking to demonstrate a path for the future. Yet the book lacks a comprehensive strategy. It touches a lot of bases—but it fails to establish connections and to tie them together. Because of this lack it may be easy for critics to dismiss this approach as not being able to offer an alternative policy to those who expressed their confusion in the New York Stock Exchange poll. That would be a mistake. If nothing else, Carnoy and Shearer are addressing, individually, *real* problems that generate economic insecurity for Americans: plant closings; declining industries; soaring housing costs; increased tension and alienation at the workplace.

It is at this level that the book becomes compat-

ible with Thurow's. For if more comprehensive economic planning is going to develop in the U.S., one must be concerned with it at both the top (Thurow's theme) and at the bottom (the theme of Carnoy and Shearer). Thurow's emphasis on workers' job security must be implemented at the local level. Workers' take-overs of even obsolete plants will continue as the first line of defense until there is a real guarantee of viable alternative jobs, not just a promise of some future "full employment."

Successful policy must stem from an analysis of the way the world works. Reagan's policy, based on an idealized version of the past, will fail, leaving the American economy with the "crisis." What we should be addressing now is the form and content of post-Reagan policy. Both of these works lend insight for the central question: what form of economic planning is going to come after the current "unleashing of entrepreneurship" fails to reduce unemployment and inflation, and fails to revitalize stagnant industries and old cities? □

John Henry Jones

Facing the Truth of History

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF BLACK AMERICA, edited by W. Augustus Low and Virgil A. Clift. New York: McGraw-Hill. 921 pp. \$49.50.

This book is a massive compendium of historical data on people of African descent in the United States. This area of our history is among the least known and understood. Like a ball of tangled thread, it must be painstakingly unraveled. Pursuing these twists, meanings, and motives is the key to an understanding of our tragic racial divisions. Social remedy requires knowledge and a grasp of the body politic both past and present.

At the outset, in their Preface, the editors acknowledge that the book's title is "a compromise between the use of two words: black and Afro-American." This is dealt with later in a sec-

tion entitled "Onomatology." There they note that "the problem of giving a name to peoples of African descent in the United States and elsewhere has been a complex and difficult one." Their choice reflects the customary perceptions today among the people discussed.

In simple A to Z format, the entries are divided into three types: articles, biographies, and cross references. There are 125 major and 120 minor articles making up two-thirds of the work. Many of the minor articles are arranged in what the editors describe as "clusters [of] . . . two or more distinct but related . . . articles usually by different authors." An example is "Afro-American history," the largest cluster, containing nine major articles on "Africa"; "African/Legacy Survival"; "Civil Disorders"; "Civil Rights"; "Education"; "Literature"; "Music"; "Race"; and "Slavery."

A nearly equal number of major articles, about 30 percent, are arranged in such clusters, one of them including the biographies of Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. DuBois, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Booker T. Washington. There are also approximately 1,400 concise biographies of persons from every walk of life. The major entries feature selected bibliographies. Throughout, the work's cross references are useful as self-indexing guides, providing additional information and interpretations.

A key contribution is a section entitled "Bibliographies/Biographies/Guides," which can save students and researchers much time. The editors note that there were few bibliographies either by or about black Americans prior to 1950. Notable pioneering exceptions were DuBois's *A Select Bibliography of the American Negro*, published in 1905, and Monroe N. Work's *Bibliography of the Negro in Africa and America*, published in 1928.

Religious organizations of great variety and diversity are treated separately because of their "abiding and fundamental force in Afro-American life and history." The major section on "Education" throws light on this thorny problem, for "since the importation of the first blacks in the 1600's into the Jamestown colony, the question of Negro education in the United States has invited controversy."

Of key importance in the unraveling of our racial history is the section on "Archives," which cites numerous libraries, historical societies, and "archival institutions" that contain various source materials.

The weakness of this major reference work is its inadequate interpretation of several key historical

developments that influenced the future of black Americans and the nation's convoluted racial relations. More definitive assessments of such historical developments—as the writing of the U.S. Constitution, the Missouri Compromise of 1820, the Compromise of 1850, or the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1954—would have shown the profound significance of the arising antagonism between Southern slavery and Northern industrialism. Many such critical events and developments are touched upon only obliquely in the *Encyclopedia*. We learn nothing of the Negro Convention movement of the early 1800s, which continued into the Reconstruction period and produced some of the most eloquent and fearless men and women in the nation's history.

Frederick Douglass was most prophetic when he denounced the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill that left slavery in the Territories up to the whims of the settlers. "Slavery aims at absolute sway and to banish liberty from the Republic . . ." he said. "It would . . . dishonor free labor with its hope of reward and establish slave labor with its dread of the lash." The slaveholders indeed were not satisfied. A great ideological struggle ensued. The rival factions took to arms in "Bleeding Kansas" and elsewhere. John Brown raided Harper's Ferry; the Republican party was organized; Abraham Lincoln was elected president; the slaveholders, following the lead of South Carolina, began the Secessionist movement, which climaxed in the Civil War.

Another serious omission is mention of the fraternal alliances and activities of Indians and black run-away slaves. The most notable of these was the fierce struggle in Florida involving the Seminoles who refused to betray the black Maroons to General Andrew Jackson's forces, precipitating the Seminole Wars of 1817 and 1832. Osceola, the chief of the Seminoles who had a black wife, was lured to a peace parley and assassinated.

The *Encyclopedia* is dispassionate in its account of the misery, torture, and death suffered by millions of Africans during the dreaded "Middle Passage," with human beings packed like sardines in the holds of the slave ships while crossing the Atlantic—one of the most monstrous episodes in human history. Moreover, accounts of several important persons have been sacrificed at the expense of voluminous biographical minutiae.

Nevertheless, this is an important contribution to the study of black American history, which is, despite its imperfections, of interest, use, and relevance. □

Nicolaus Mills

Southern Labor Battles

WORKING LIVES: THE SOUTHERN EXPOSURE—HISTORY OF LABOR IN THE SOUTH, ed. by Marc S. Miller. New York: Pantheon Books. 414 pp. Cloth, \$17.95; paper, \$7.95.

The turn of the century brought with it a special kind of regimentation for the American worker. As labor historian David Brody has noted, after 1900 the wage earner stood "wholly within the modern industrial order." There was less of a premium on skills that required independence of judgment and had once been handed down from generation to generation. It was the modern industrial order—mechanized, tightly managed—that now dominated the workplace. In the North the result was a loss of craft. A man who had once been a glass blower or an iron puddler became a machine tender. In the South the results were more devastating. There the rise of modern industrialism brought about drastic changes in workers' lives. Men who had managed to eke out a living from the land ceased being farmers altogether and in a single generation became factory workers, living in mill villages, spending 10 to 12 hours a day under the supervision of a foreman.

In the photographs he took of Carolina textile mills during the first decade of this century Lewis Hine captured the brutalizing quality of Southern industrialism with a special poignancy. But what Hine's photographs caught was not an isolated moment in history so much as a legacy. Russell Lee's 1940s pictures of a Kentucky coal-mining family are no less haunting, and in the '70s Earl Dotter's photos of brown lung (cotton dust) victims remind us once again that the South's industrialism continues to take its toll.

This vision of the South also characterizes *Working Lives*, and what follows in this collection—most of which first appeared in the magazine *Southern Exposure*—reflects the violence of Southern labor history. Instead of the Southern battles that have become legends, we have Gauley Bridge, West Virginia, where 2,000 workers died of silicosis on a single tunnel project; Gastonia, North Carolina, where workers braved brutal police harassment to carry on the largest and most famous of the early textile strikes; Harlan County, Kentucky, where coal strikes are still a form of

warfare. The result is an anthology with an axe to grind—an axe sharp enough to put a dent in the myth of a South free from labor troubles.

The book makes clear that, if we are to understand the South's slowness in unionizing, we must go beyond explanations that cite Southern paternal traditions or the inner closeness of white, rural communities that never had to absorb a massive influx of 19th-century immigrants. We must look to the way Southern companies have reacted when their workers tried to organize: how they bought sheriffs, pitted race against race, cut off general credit to families isolated in mill villages.

IN A PERIOD when the South is being written off as "Reagan Country" and the North continues to be drained by runaway factories looking for cheap Southern labor, *Working Lives* could not be a more timely text. Unfortunately, the very virtues of *Working Lives* also point up its defects, and in the end the book's intentions, its timeliness, its anticonsensus concerns are far more impressive than what it delivers. Studs Terkel's *Working* has been the model for this collection, and the unevenness of the collection reflects the difficulty of applying such an approach to an anthology. We do not, as in Terkel's *Working*, have a single figure doing the interviews and deciding what is and is not revealing about the testimony of each essay; the result is great variations in quality and insight. We go from historical accounts that are moving and unique to others that seem like fillers.

The same problems exist in the overall structure of *Working Lives*. The collection has three distinct sections: "The Promised Land," which focuses on the years 1900-29 and the transition workers made from farm to mill; "No More Moanin'," which takes us through World War II and concentrates on the impact the New Deal had on Southern unionization; "Here Come a Wind," which brings us up to 1980 and explores the efforts big business has made, ever since the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, to thwart Southern workers' efforts at organizing.

But what we need from *Working Lives* is much more than a concept of historical dividers. At the very least we need to know why the collection documents certain radical episodes in Southern labor history and omits others, and why the years 1900-29 are given only 60 pages while the years 1945-80 merit 167 pages. By the time we read the conclusion of *Working Lives* it is all too easy to suspect that convenience or availability of material has played a key role in shaping the collection. □

Charles Bloomstein

On the Theory of Nonviolence

SOCIAL POWER AND POLITICAL FREEDOM, by Gene Sharp. Boston: Porter Sargent. 456 pp. Cloth \$15.95, paper \$8.95.

The control and use of power was central to the thought of both Marx and Gandhi, yet they differed sharply in their views on how power should be exercised and for what purposes, and on how to respond to violence used against their movements. Marx, though he preferred to come to power through peaceful processes, was willing to use violence to defend socialism. Gandhi believed that violence could be rendered useless, even counter-productive, as a political tool. His strategy was to continue the pressures of nonviolent noncooperation and resistance, regardless of the degree of violence used on the other side. Marx's position is consistent with the centralization of power, Gandhi's with its decentralization.

Despite Marx's belief in his grand theory as an ultimate truth, his followers expanded, changed, and modified his precepts so that there is no single present-day Marxism. Gandhi, on the other hand, never formulated any overarching theory, but he led masses of people in struggles for clearly defined though limited goals. Each struggle helped him refine his strategy on the testing ground of pragmatic action. He saw his work as experimental, hoping that further development might some day yield a form of effective mass action. Yet Gandhi's tentative insights have by and large been accepted as sacred by his relatively few followers, and little further exploration has been attempted.

Gene Sharp is a notable exception. For more than 30 years he has been mining the rich vein exposed by Gandhi, and he has produced some important works—the latest, *Social Power and Political Freedom*. This is a collection of essays and lectures, some going back to the early 1960s and revised for this publication, others written especially for it. Despite some forgivable duplication, the book presents a unified thesis.

Sharp is a revisionist; he uses Gandhi as a springboard for an investigation of the wide variety of techniques appropriate to nonviolent noncooperation and resistance and the many areas of public life to which they could be applied. While he does

not take direct issue with Gandhi, he discards what he considers excess baggage in theory and practice, and sees nonviolence essentially as a method of behavior not at all dependent on motive or attitude. Whether or not imbued with love, it is aimed at achieving certain specified results. It can be used for antisocial purposes, like any other instrument of power. But even if so used, the results will not be as harmful to society as violence.

Furthermore, and again somewhat contrary to Gandhi, Sharp views the nonviolent technique as primarily coercive, not necessarily aimed at changing the heart of the oppressor. Revealing the suffering of the oppressed is one technique but not the only one, and by no means the most important. Strikes, boycotts, noncooperation, and civil disobedience are sources of power that can depose an oppressor or, at the very least, moderate oppression. Sharp cites the comment of the Indian Gandhian socialist R. Lohia that far more important than changing the heart of the oppressor was the need to change the hearts of the oppressed, so that they would stop consenting to their own oppression.

Sharp asserts that nonviolence is the only suitable instrument that can empower the masses of people and change their power relations with their rulers. Certain forms of resistance will tend toward centralization and thereby strengthen the ruler, while others will devolve power away from the central authority. While decentralist, Sharp accepts the necessity of political power, which he describes as the influences, pressures, awards, and sanctions that provide authority and the capacity to control. He cites dozens of basic works in political theory, from Machiavelli on, and from these he draws the assumptions that permeate the work. One often finds oneself nodding in agreement at one assertion or another—and yet the totality adds up to an outright rejection of politics as we know it. It may therefore be useful to summarize his argument.

Among Sharp's basic assumptions is that any government, even the most totalitarian, depends on the public's acceptance of its legitimacy and authority. Violence, terror, and oppression are useful to cement that authority, but without that acceptance governments fall. Another basic assumption, accepted by democrats, is that unless the citizenry is informed and active in defense of its freedom, civil and political liberties will be lost, either by chipping away, coup, or revolution. Sharp contends that all who wield power seek to expand it. Vigilance remains the price of liberty,

apathy assures its death. Sharp here asks for a great deal more vigilance than has ever been achieved, except in moments of crisis.

Sharp makes the assumption that centralization and liberty are incompatible. Yet there is increasing centralization in all societies, and no one seems to know what to do about it. He argues for counter-vailing strength in the form of dispersed loci of power. These, he says, are the best defense against tyranny, and indeed are peculiarly American, as was noted by de Tocqueville. These loci can have their sources in family life, social classes, religious, cultural, or ethnic groupings, occupational and economic ties, or other voluntary organizations, as well as in smaller governmental units. They can prevent usurpations of power, which constitutional guarantees, while valuable, cannot.

Sharp believes that sanctions are needed to maintain stability and order, but he questions the usefulness of such violent sanctions as a police force, prison systems, and a centralized military. Dependence on violence, he claims, leads to political stratification, with the elite class that controls the sanction apparatus inevitably dominating the economic and political structure. This, he argues, leaves no possibility for the emergence of truly socialist or humanitarian democracies. He believes, however, that nonviolent sanctions can be developed, and that these can help decentralize power.

According to Sharp, neither the Communists nor democratic socialists have devised effective political techniques to achieve their objectives. Communists believe in violence and the acquisition of power by antidemocratic means, and while socialists prefer peaceful processes they generally agree that violence may be necessary to defend an electoral victory against armed resistance. Both rely on violence as the ultimate sanction, and neither provides a method through which a peaceful, democratic, and humane revolution can be effective. To quote Sharp:

It is a shattering, but usually unnoticed, fact that in every country in which an avowed social revolution has occurred by means of violent struggle or political dictatorship, there exists a military establishment and system, and a police and prison system, which are more powerful absolutely in weaponry, combat strength, and in surveillance and control abilities, than were those of the ancient régime.

In these essays Sharp never underestimates the problems or the strength of the opposition, nor does he exaggerate what can be accomplished. His writing is calm and reasonable, without flights of

fancy or rhetoric. With the voice of hard reality he points out, for example, that emotionally satisfying actions are not necessarily effective. He does not believe that disarmament, world government, or appeals to religion, ethics, or morality can end war. The replacement of any institution requires an alternate means of performing the functions of that institution, and replacing the instruments of war, for example, requires some method of providing national security. Sharp proposes what he calls civilian-based defense. Such civilian-based defense, he stresses, requires planning, training, resources, strategies, and dedication. It depends on the general public's refusal to accept the invader's authority, through strikes, general strikes, boycotts, and other forms of noncooperation and civil disobedience, of which Sharp has catalogued almost 200 variations. Such a defense is not without cost or risk. But its cost in lives and treasure is far less than that of war, Sharp asserts.

There is no record of any civilian-based defense that has been completely successful. But all such efforts to date have been spontaneous, coming after aggression and without prior preparation or organization—under the most adverse circumstances possible. Sharp can cite a number of instances in which such nonviolent resistance has had at least limited success. It is his contention that, with proper training, preparation, and resources, such a defense can be formidable, perhaps unconquerable.

IT WOULD BE EASY to dismiss *Social Power and Political Freedom* as impractical. Yet few now are confident that our continued dependence on violence will lead to anything worthwhile—disaster seems to be the general prediction. Can we afford to dismiss a view, however utopian it may seem, that offers a way out? Being acutely aware of the odds against him, Sharp's plea is that these ideas be investigated and explored. Government obviously will not make available the resources required, but academia might provide a start. This volume has been designed as a political science text, and such use may lead to the increased attention for which Sharp begs.

Sharp's argument is that the only way to eliminate war, economic injustice, genocide, and dictatorship is by training the masses of people in the techniques of nonviolent noncooperation and resistance, and by their being ever vigilant in the defense of democratic values. This thesis is bound to be looked upon with skepticism—with good reason. Humans have always been able to develop

the moral fervor that enables them to die as they attempt to kill for what they believe in. But few have been willing to be killed without trying to kill. Is it possible for that willingness to exist in the populace as a whole?

Even if this strategy would work, can we risk the test? Can we shift our present reliance on arms and violence to an alert and active body politic anxious to defend its freedoms? Can we develop such a body politic when the mass of U.S. citizens seem to be decreasingly involved with our democratic processes, viz. the steady decline of voting? Can we expect the kind of radical shift required if Sharp's thesis is to be given a chance?

Yet, as we view Poland today, can we afford to discount that approach? The totalitarian Soviet Union has been reluctant to use violence in the face of a seemingly united and resistant public, perhaps recognizing that this would be far more costly in the long run. There may be something to Sharp's position after all. □

George W. Breslauer

What's Ahead in the Soviet Union?

STALIN'S SUCCESSORS: LEADERSHIP, STABILITY, AND CHANGE IN THE SOVIET UNION, by Seweryn Bialer. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. 312 pp. \$19.95.

This may well be the most important book on contemporary Soviet politics to appear in a decade. Seweryn Bialer has undertaken a "synthetic overview" of continuity and change in Soviet politics during the Brezhnev era. The book is divided into five parts. Part One discusses the nature of "mature Stalinism" (1938-53) as the base point from which to measure the scope and character of change in the post-Stalin era. Part Two analyzes the nature of the current Soviet political and administrative elites: their age structure, career paths, turnover rates, policy orientations, and the coming massive generational change within them. Part Three addresses at great length

the question of stability and instability of the Soviet system as a whole, and the likely impact of generational change on that condition. Part Four discusses current Soviet perspectives on key issues of international relations: the role of U.S.-Soviet relations in the international system; the "correlation of forces" in the international system; the role of military power in international relations; and the nature of the Third World as a competitive arena, in which the great powers attempt to translate their power into lasting influence. Finally, Part Five analyzes the current state of the Soviet economy, and the likely impact of generational change, political succession, and economic "stringency" on pressures for reform in the 1980s.

There has long been a need for a synthetic overview of this kind. As in many fields of inquiry, but reinforced by the sensitivity of the subject matter in American politics, the tendency in discussions of Soviet politics has been to dichotomize issues and polarize debate around extreme positions. Thus the "great debates" during the 1970s have revolved around the following definitions of alternatives: (1) totalitarian versus pluralist images of the Soviet policy process; (2) stability versus instability as alternative images of the future of the Soviet political system; (3) continuity versus change in Soviet politics and policy since Stalin; (4) ambition versus fear as dominant motivations behind Soviet foreign policy decision-making. While such polarization of perspectives is natural and can be useful as a means of ordering thought and inquiry, it also runs the risk of stultifying the search for intermediate statements that synthesize the two positions conceptually and empirically. For the temptation is to set one's sights primarily on casting doubt upon the images and arguments of one's opponents—"the Soviet system is *not* totalitarian/pluralist"; "Soviet foreign policy is *not* insatiably expansionist"; and so on. As a result, discussion focuses more on what the Soviet Union is not than on what it is. Fortunately, *Stalin's Successors* transcends these debates.

Bialer defines the changes in Soviet politics and policy since Stalin as fundamental ones, and he believes that an understanding of those changes is essential for an appreciation of the depth of stability in the Soviet system. "Mature" Stalinism was a totalitarian despotism, in which mass terror was used to keep both the masses and the elites in line, and under which mass consumer expectations were repressed and economic austerity was imposed in the name of national security. Under Brezhnev, in contrast (though the change had begun under Krushchev), the Soviet regime has

evolved into a "mature" authoritarianism, no longer employing mass terror against either the elites or the population-at-large, under which most elite groups (including the large middle class) have been given a stake in the system, and under which mass consumer expectations have been satisfactorily managed and met through a highly developed welfare system and incremental improvements in the standard of living. As a result of these and other appeals that the regime has been able to generate, a foundation of legitimacy and stability has been created for the Soviet system:

The legitimacy of the Soviet system is conditioned by its longevity, by its withstanding the test of major crises and shocks, by its identification with great-power nationalism which unified the masses and the elites, by the successful symbiosis of the messianic doctrinal elements of Marxism-Leninism with this nationalism, by the increase in the number and weight of the strata in Soviet society which have a stake in the system and particularly in its activities, by the basic unity of its elites, and by the complex way in which the system is integrated. It is the development of this legitimacy that characterizes the new "mature" phase of Soviet authoritarianism and underlies its basic stability.

But Bialer's perspective on Soviet stability is not one-sided. He recognizes the manifold problems and tensions that beset the Soviet order, and he acknowledges the crisis potential in some of these tensions. Worsening economic bottlenecks and budgetary stringency, rising interethnic tensions that could seriously exacerbate the nationality problem, slowing rates of social mobility, and problems of political succession all come in for incisive analysis. At the same time Bialer distinguishes between problems and crises, tensions and instability, and concludes that while tensions will undoubtedly rise in the 1980s, they will in all probability remain manageable. This distinction is fundamental to the analysis, although it has all too often been missed by those who prophesy doom for the Soviet polity. (There is an equally fundamental difference in the field of psychology between a patient placed on valium to control tension, and one placed in the hospital with a nervous breakdown!)

Part of the reason why tension may be rising in the 1980s is the confluence of economic stringency, political succession, and generational change within the Soviet establishment. In Bialer's estimation, this will not undermine the stability of the system, but it will create pressures for policy changes, pressures of an intensity that has not been witnessed since the 1950s. Bialer is too sophisticated

to make firm predictions of how the national leadership will respond to those pressures, but he will clearly be surprised if it does not seize the opportunity to try another round of economic (but not political) reform. Bialer's perspective on the relationship between stability, effectiveness, and change in Soviet politics is summed up in the closing paragraph of the book:

Time is not running out on the Soviet system. The regime still possesses enormous reserves of stability, but adjustments have to be made if the system is to remain effective. Yet if the combination of the economic emergencies facing the Soviet Union in the 1980s together with the openings afforded by the approaching succession of leadership and elites do not yield serious efforts to reform the traditional economic system, then I do not know what may and will. Should actual Soviet growth and energy shortages in the 1980s fall within the range of the most pessimistic projections, the Soviet Union, without the reform and a successful one at that, is condemned not simply to a process of "muddling through" but a process of "muddling down."

TURNING TO SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY, Bialer weaves together a tapestry of propositions about Soviet perspectives and the sources of Soviet conduct. He views foreign policy as relatively autonomous, and he does not echo those who claim that beleaguered Soviet elites search continually for "wins" abroad to compensate for lack of effectiveness and legitimacy at home. He believes rather that Soviet foreign policy can be understood as a product of a combination of Soviet international ambitions *and* fears, strengths *and* weaknesses, offensive *and* defensive orientations, optimism *and* realism. This is not simply a matter of splitting the difference, or of endorsing an intermediate position for its own sake. Bialer introduces an array of distinctions that allow him to define just how Soviet foreign policy perspectives look today. For example, scholars have long debated whether Soviet leaders remain optimistic about the state of the international system. Bialer's contribution is more subtle:

When Soviet leaders observe a change in the relations of forces in their own favor, they think primarily in terms of change in the *correlation of trends*. It is the direction and magnitude of *trends* in their favor which they have found so satisfying. . . . [But in] their assessment of the relation of forces at this particular historical moment they are realistic.

Bialer places much more emphasis on Soviet ambitions than do many respected analysts, but much less than does the Reagan administration. The bottom line of his analysis, therefore, is that

the U.S. can do business with the Soviet Union:

Assuming that the American policy toward the Soviet Union will exhibit both a willingness and ability to resist the Soviet interpretation of what *détente* permits it to do militarily in the Third World, and a greater willingness and ability to assure real prospects of economic cooperation with the Soviet Union, the pressures for restraint in Soviet foreign policy, especially in seizing marginal targets of opportunity, should be much greater in the coming decade.

But this conclusion should not be overinterpreted. Specifically, it should not be confused with the ability to turn the Soviet Union into a status quo power. Third World competition can be managed but not eliminated:

The Soviet Union is not simply a great and global power, however. Its leadership holds to the view that the world is divided into opposing systems of competing values. Such a view works inherently against the acceptance of any long-range status quo. It is just this combination of the traditional dynamic of an ascending power with the volatile dynamic of a power which postulates a different world outlook and inevitable competition with other powers that undermines the likely success of balance-of-power policies, that limits the scope of bilateral U.S.-Soviet agreements, and that precludes the inherent stability of long-range solutions.

WHILE I GREATLY ADMIRE this book, I also have problems with it. Regarding the present and future of Soviet politics, Bialer's arguments are powerful but hardly conclusive. His prediction of a tense but manageable political order squares with my own estimate of the situation but rests ultimately on the unknown: assumptions about moods within the Soviet Union's working class, its conformist middle class, and its political establishment. We simply do not know how much latent disaffection there is with the system, and how much latent potential for flashpoints lurks beneath the surface. Indeed, two dimensions of Soviet life that have begun to receive attention in recent years—the apparent sharpening of Russian chauvinist sentiment within the establishment, and an apparent increase in the scope of the "second economy" and corruption—are virtually not discussed in the book. Bialer may be implying that he does not consider them important features of a discussion of leadership, stability, and change, but others do, and so he might have justified this conclusion explicitly.

The most serious omission, however, is the failure to display systematically the evidence for controversial assertions throughout the book. Be-

cause of these omissions the book is more readable, but also less persuasive.

My complaint is not motivated by mere methodological pedantry. Since my disagreements with Bialer's arguments relate primarily to his assertions about Soviet foreign policy, I will illustrate the general problem with an example from the chapters dealing with foreign policy.

Bialer argues that "the Soviet Union is interested in fomenting conflicts, escalating conflicts, maintaining them at a high level of intensity, and exploiting them but not in their peaceful solution, especially in their early stages, when they are most susceptible of solution." I find this proposition to be exaggerated and overgeneralized. Soviet attitudes toward conflict resolution in the early 1970s (when détente was flourishing) were often contingent upon U.S. attitudes toward Soviet inclusion in the process. When treated like an illegitimate partner (for example, in the Middle East negotiations), the Soviets first tried to gain inclusion through partial accommodation, and then resorted to obstructionist behavior when denied access. The dynamic of this interaction is lost in Bialer's discussions, largely owing to his concentration on current perspectives. And even with respect to these, I am skeptical of the more extreme of Bialer's assertions, both because he does not display his evidence, and because they ignore the fact that Soviet perspectives or positions are often (not always!) contingent on the sincerity of American collaborative offerings.

In general, the subtlety of Bialer's insights about Soviet foreign policy allows him to destroy the arguments of those who inordinately emphasize either ambition or fear as dominant motivations. But the arguments are insufficiently documented to deal with the objections of those who worry about relative weights within a mix of motivations; I too would emphasize a mix of ambition and fear, but I place less weight on the ambition side of the mix than does Bialer. Yet, as the above quotation suggests, where one comes down on this question has important policy impli-

cations that could spell the difference between a successful detente and an unsuccessful one.

These objections notwithstanding, I heartily agree with Richard H. Ullman, who is quoted on the jacket of the book as saying: "If I were to refer an intelligent reader to a single work on the Soviet Union in the 1980s, *Stalin's Successors* would be it." □

Recommended

Considerations of space made it impossible for us to publish a full-length review of *The Life and Soul of a Legendary Jewish Socialist: The Memoirs of Vladimir Medem*, translated and edited by Samuel A. Portnoy (Ktav, 70 Varick St., New York, N.Y. 10013. 608 pp. \$20.) Quite apart from its value as a document in the history of the Jewish Labor Bund (a much neglected chapter of socialist and Jewish history), the reader will find this autobiography of a remarkable man most appealing. Medem was born into a family converting from Judaism to various branches of Christianity in Czarist Russia. Baptized in the Russian Orthodox faith, he found his way to the labor movement and to himself as a Jew in his late teens. He had to learn Yiddish from scratch, as he later learned Polish, eventually becoming so proficient in the language that he could write and speak it fluently as one of the leaders of the Bund. With the Bund now reduced to remnants in this and a few other countries (which still meet, debate, pass resolutions), one is well reminded that at one time it was the largest socialist organization in prewar Poland. This autobiography takes Medem's life up to 1915. He died in America, in 1923. A Yiddish edition of his autobiography was published in 1923, with a preface by Abraham Cahan, editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*. Professor Portnoy has rendered a service with his painstaking translation and annotations. He is now engaged in writing a study that will carry forward the story of Medem's life, and of the history of the Bund, its attitude toward Bolshevism (there is an interesting encounter with Lenin in this volume), and toward Zionism. You don't have to be Jewish or a socialist to find this book worth reading.

E. G. □

To Our Contributors

- When sending manuscripts, please make sure that you do not send your only copy
 - And please also be sure to enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.
-

LETTERS

On "*Commentary*" and the American Jews

Editors:

I find much to disagree with in Bernard Avishai's lengthy diatribe against *Commentary* Magazine. However, I write not to present a detailed rebuttal but to refute a statement attributed to me by Mr. Avishai in the body of his essay.

Mr. Avishai writes that "Bayard Rustin . . . once told me he considered [*Commentary*'s] line on social questions a dishonor to the relations between blacks and Jews in New York." Not only have I never made such a claim and not only would I never make such a claim, I do not recall ever having spoken to Mr. Avishai about *Commentary*'s editorial "line" or any other matter.

Be that as it may, I consider the discussions in *Commentary* on international affairs and social questions to be intelligent, enlightening and useful contributions to the debate over public policy.

I might remind Mr. Avishai and the readers of *Dissent* that even in the 1960s during its "radical" phase, *Commentary* defied the conventional liberal point of view on racial matters and other social issues.

I do not deny that since then *Commentary* has undergone significant political changes. Nor could I assert that I agree with every article which has appeared in *Commentary*.

However, under Norman Podhoretz's stewardship, the virtue of *Commentary* has been its keen ability to break through the clichés and dogma which seem to pervade and paralyze thinking on social issues and programs. This is something which is particularly valuable at a time when the struggle for racial and social justice appears to have reached an impasse.

BAYARD RUSTIN
New York City

BERNARD AVISHAI REPLIES:

Bayard Rustin participated in a discussion of black-Jewish relations, sponsored by the Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, on December 9, 1979, at the home of Stanley and Simone Plastrik. At that meeting, he scored several black leaders for anti-Semitic statements and for promoting the PLO; and along with others at the meeting he expressed disappointment with Jewish intellectuals who were using their opposition to quotas to abandon the very concept of affirmative

action and dissociate themselves from the interests of the black community. I drove Mr. Rustin home after the meeting and pressed him on the point. He conceded as we discussed the matter in the car that the "*Commentary* crowd" were in their own way as discreditable as those black leaders who've been putting forward a narrow view of their own interests while betraying a common and historic need for a democratic coalition. Some of these words were his, some mine. They were certainly voiced and agreed to.

The view of *Commentary* Mr. Rustin now advances in his letter is, he would have it, the more considered one. I am sorry for that. And I am also sorry that he has found me less memorable than I found him. □

On El Salvador

Editors:

In the summer 1981 *Dissent* Irving Howe has presented a sober if depressing picture of current realities in El Salvador. His summary of political developments in that country reveals that Howe does not regard the Duarte regime to be a moderate government of the political center, as it has constantly been depicted by both the policy-makers of the Carter and Reagan administrations.

The major problem I have with Howe's analysis is that his ambivalent conclusion does not coincide with his own assessment of political realities—particularly when he cautions that there is no side or force "we ought to support." In reaching that judgment, Howe is asking the critical question about El Salvador that the democratic left has a moral responsibility to ask: Does our opposition to the military dominated junta mean we are boxed into support of a future left authoritarian government? Or of the current Marxist-Leninist-led guerrillas?

This is indeed a dilemma. It appears that the situation is so bad in El Salvador that even such an outcome is now seen by some as preferable. Thus a Jesuit priest told journalist Anne Nelson "I think that anything, including the most extremist, repressive, Stalinist regime imaginable would be better than what we are living now. . . . I ask myself, under a Communist regime, what we would have to lose?" He noted that his country had no freedom of the press, no free assembly, and that the only forces killing priests and nuns were those of the government and its security forces.

Of course, we must provide answers for the growing cynicism of people like that recently "radicalized" Jesuit. The priest's comments underscore the point enunciated by Howe: the Reagan program of all-out aid to the military, combined with abandonment of even the pretense of support to reforms, only sharpens the polariza-

tion and thus strengthens the hands of the authoritarian left.

But Howe shows little trust or faith in the Salvadoran social democrats, or understanding of why they have acted to join the guerrilla opposition. Is the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), whose chairman is the social democrat Guillermo Ungo, merely fronting for a totalitarian military command structure? Is it certain that if his side wins, the future of El Salvador will be determined by hard-line Marxist-Leninists, who will call all the shots behind the scenes?

First, it is important to understand that the FDR, as Richard E. Feinberg writes in the Summer 1981 *Foreign Affairs*, "is a front organization only to the extent that any grouping of middle-class social democrats and Christians momentarily allied with Marxists qualifies as such." And it is also important to underscore, as does Robert E. Leiken in the Spring *Foreign Policy*, that "the three major left-wing guerrilla groups all have anti-Soviet origins, harbor mutual distrust and retain separate organizational structures." Yet, as Leiken explains, their strength lies in concrete ties with mass popular organizations who turned to them for protection.

What role the guerrillas will have vis-à-vis the democratic left should they be brought into the political process rests with the context in which a new alignment of forces takes place. Leonel Gomez, an architect of the original land-reform program who is now seeking political asylum in the United States, notes in the Summer 1981 *Foreign Policy* that increased repression and a support to the military increases the strength of the guerrillas in the FDR coalition and works to erode civilian power. Yet, he adds, Ungo and the moderates of the left do have "somewhat more power in their alliance with the guerrillas than the Christian Democrats have in their alliance with the army."

Gomez's point is simple. The civilian moderates of the FDR could once again gain the upper hand. Since the guerrilla rebels now seem to acknowledge that a military victory is impossible in the short run, he writes, "the guerrillas are willing to give more power to the moderate FDR." Military weakness—symbolized by the failure of the guerrillas' January "final offensive"—worked to strengthen the hand of Ungo and the democratic left.

Support of the opposition, therefore, does not have to mean that we are backing left authoritarians. As the Mexicans realize, the best hope for stability in Central America is through the building-up of the social democratic opposition. But the Reagan team sees things differently, and has even opted for increased military aid to the brutal regime in Guatemala.

We in the United States must support a political solution that will end the violence. But the Duarte government has rebuffed any steps toward negotiations, since they are interpreted (correctly) as including a political role for the left opposition. The Salvadoran military has learned that they can ignore international pressure for such negotiation, since they rightfully interpret the

Reagan policy to mean support to their drive for victory.

We must do all we can to urge our comrades to accept negotiations (and to oppose those guerrilla leaders who also oppose such a course).

But if the left was to be brought into the process, would it in fact respect democracy, pluralism, and a mixed economy? The answer again lies in the context. Guillermo Ungo has stressed, as he did in a March interview, that "after a democratic victory, the country's development will take place within the sphere of the Western capitalist system: co-existence with the U.S. will then become a matter of necessity, not mere tactics." And he asks that El Salvador not be forced to have to make a choice between the power blocs of East and West.

Yet this is the very choice being forced upon the peoples of Central America. The U.S. evidently is not yet ready to live with a left-wing nationalist revolution in our own backyard, especially one committed to social equality and breaking the power of long-entrenched local oligarchies. It is in this context, as Pierre Schori notes, that the guerrillas in El Salvador have obtained a "substantial following among the people," and hence their country cannot be governed without them. But they cannot win either, and—unless there is to be a long and bloody war of attrition—there must be a broadly based coalition government, one similar to the October junta, that consolidates reforms and breaks the stranglehold of the military.

The choice for Central and Latin America must not be defined as one between Castroism or American imperialism. There is a third, hidden tradition, as the Marxist Gordon K. Lewis puts it, of a Caribbean democratic socialism.

But this means—and here is my disagreement with Howe—that we *must* aid and support those seeking to disband the military power that props up oppressive regimes, and we must stand with those who seek social justice and national independence. In this struggle for justice, Pierre Schori has stated, "the front lines are already drawn," and "in that struggle, social democracy has made its choice." Within the coalition struggling against the right-wing militarists, we must work to enhance the power and position of the democrats of the left, who are not fighting to replace one kind of authoritarianism with another. But we can only have leverage, I think, working within that coalition and alongside the opposition.

RONALD RADOSH
New York City

IRVING HOWE REPLIES:

I am grateful to Ronald Radosh for the civility of his letter, but not convinced that he is right on our one point of difference. We agree that the Reagan policy regarding El Salvador is a disaster, and we agree that the only hope for that unhappy country is a "political solution," that is,

some sort of arranged compromise in which all the contending forces can participate in peaceful, free elections.

In my article I remain skeptical about the claims that in case of a guerrilla victory, someone like Ungo, obviously “one of us,” could exert enough control to prevent the authoritarian elements among the guerrillas from establishing a new kind of dictatorship. (That the guerrilla groups are “anti-Soviet” is not decisive; the question is, are they in favor of a dictatorship?)

Political liberty is obviously not all the people of El Salvador need; but in order to get the rest of what they need, they need political liberty. □

Objection

Editors:

I wish to protest Bernard Avishai’s slur on Jewish women in his otherwise trenchant and timely article on *Commentary* magazine. Avishai’s gratuitous reference to “suburban princesses” is an example of a phenomenon that I have noticed with increasing distress: people who would ordinarily be extremely self-conscious about maligning one group or another do not scruple to do so when that group happens to be female. As a Jewish woman, I am tired of hearing about “princesses,” suburban or otherwise, and I do not find anti-Semitism any more attractive when leveled by Jews against other Jews, even when one group is men and the other women.

SUZANNE K. HYMAN
Highland Park, N.J. □

Free Speech for Nazis?— And Who Are “Our” Crazies?

Editors:

Compared with the furor over Skokie three years ago, the threatened Nazi-Klu Klux Klan march in Detroit in the summer of 1980 was a tempest in a teapot. The controversy erupted at a Detroit City Council hearing called to consider granting a parade permit to the Nazi-KKK group. The meeting of 500 people was disrupted by the shouting members of several left sects; members of the Revolutionary Communist party (RCP) and the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL) were arrested.

At the beginning, the hearing seemed to reflect Detroit’s progressive politics at its best: the City Council was holding an open forum on an issue that moved the community. But as the shouters grew bolder it became

clear that a number of them had come for one purpose: to break up the meeting. These members of the RCP, RSL, and the Communist Workers party (CWP) took over while dozens of other socialists—perhaps one-third of the group—sat passively. Finally one inspired leftist began to chant: “Put them out, put them out.” Slowly, reluctantly, the crowd joined in. And the police acted.

Disturbed by the destructive role played by people identified as socialists, the authors, along with Professor David Herreshoff of Wayne State University, circulated a draft statement intended for the Detroit dailies. Its purpose was to disassociate publicly the rest of the left from actions that were not only inappropriate but showed contempt for the people assembled to speak and to listen.

The statement was sent with a covering letter to over 100 socialists across the entire Detroit left spectrum—from the Detroit Alliance for a Rational Economy (DARE, the organization of Councilman Ken Cockrel), the New American Movement (NAM), and the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC), to such “far left” organizations as the Communist party-Marxist Leninist (CPML) and many independent and unaffiliated socialists. Receiving countless proposed changes, the authors doggedly rewrote the statement to preserve the widest possible consensus. In the end, 52 people signed a letter indicating their opposition to the Nazis and the Klan but affirming as central to both democracy and socialism “the right of all persons to publicly argue their viewpoints, however repugnant, provided they respect the rights of others.”

The *Detroit Free Press* published the statement with two of the 52 submitted signatures, but the *Detroit News* passed it by. The *DARE Dispatch* printed the letter, with all the signatures, and an approving introduction (Cockrel had been one of the only two Council members to take a consistent civil libertarian position on the Nazi-KKK march: the “progressives” faded under public pressure). The editor of *In These Times* decided not to run the statement, arguing that the left-sectarian groups should be ignored as “irrelevant to American politics.” The *Nation* first encouraged a piece on the issue but then rejected it as too narrowly focused on Detroit.

This mixed response mirrored the initial reaction we received. Half the people contacted refused to endorse the statement or its purpose. For example, no one signed who was close to or a member of the Communist party or the Socialist Workers party. Some of the negative responses are instructive:

“As crazy as [the members of RCP] are I don’t think we should call on the authorities or anyone else to punish them.”

“To send this type of letter is divisive. . . . We should not be discussing these things in public.”

“The whole thing comes on too civil libertarian. Leave the ACLU to such problems. Our first order of business is to mobilize against racism, not to defend the abstract right to express it.”

To these responses must be added those of persons

who agreed to sign only after we deleted the original concluding sentence: "Repugnant as they are to us, we nevertheless will defend the right of the RCP itself to freedom of speech and association."

The experience raised two issues for us: the left's difficulty in dealing with our own sectarians, and the left's ambivalence toward civil liberties. On the second issue we expect that our conclusions will warm a few hearts among *Dissent* readers; but on the first we anticipate some disagreement.

Sectarian groups are viewed by some on the left as "crazies," by some as comrades, and by some as agents; there are those who would ignore them, those who would debate them (but not in public), and those who would deny them free speech. While some of the left respect them as dedicated but misguided revolutionaries, others hate them passionately as violating everything that socialism stands for. This striking divergence across the left spectrum conceals what we think is perhaps the most important fact about such groups as the RSL, CWP, and RCP: they are *our* lunatic fringe, *our* sectarians, *our* doctrinaire and authoritarian purists, *our* dangerous "crazies." "Our": it may stick in the throat of many *Dissent* readers, but neither the urge nor the act of disowning can efface the common origins and common commitments.

Among these groups are people of deep conviction and enormous energy who have gravitated toward a doctrinaire vanguard politics under the same debilitating pressures, and in the same rudderless situation, faced by all American socialists—and liberals. Coming of age personally and politically in a movement that burst on the scene without firm ties to the past and future, they awoke like the rest of us in a period of reaction. Lacking a continuing movement to sustain commitment independently of subjective will and personal acts, all '60s and '70s activists have found passage difficult into political maturity. Many have retreated from politics; others have become absorbed in local issues and still others have turned to doctrinaire leftism.

Those of us who seek other possibilities have been trying to learn to live with the tension of having a commitment to fundamental change but no guidelines or coherent organizational forms with which to pursue such change. Those in such groups as RSL, RCP, and CWP "solve" the problem faced by all of us by choosing doctrine over reality. From their point of view, self-protectively isolated from the real experience of most people in the society, they alone have answers while others are "revisionists" and "opportunists." What else could their "politics" become but repeated demonstrations of alienation and futility through forms of exhibitionism that only intensify their isolation? But those of us who remain committed to politics rather than exhibitionism have been unable to offer them compelling political vehicles for change.

American society and culture, especially in this period of our history, make even more difficult the dilemmas faced by socialists in all times and places: how to remain

firmly rooted in this world, speaking its language, voicing its concerns—while aiming at a better world. How far can those who believe in a radical transformation of the society enter into its system of power, authority, and values, without deforming their commitment? Until the dilemmas are comprehended, our historical limitations faced, and effective political vehicles constructed, sectarian leftism is but one of many pseudosolutions to a near-impossible situation.

We say that the situation is near-impossible: few situations, and certainly not our own, are so grim as to leave no room for an effective politics. A touchstone of the left's ability to live in this world while seeking to change it becomes evident in the controversy over the KKK-Nazi demonstration: our attitude toward civil liberties. Nowhere is its isolation from the soil of America more evident than in the ultraleft's dismissal of concern for civil liberties as "abstract" and "bourgeois." At the time of Skokie, Carl Cohen offered a defense of the First Amendment that the left would do well to study. In a series of mock-dialogues, Cohen addressed several major objections to free speech for the Nazis in Skokie, from the patent evil of their anti-Semitic exhortations, to the psychic harm they might do to survivors of the Holocaust, to the encouragement such expressions might give to anti-Semitic acts. Again and again, however, he returned to the central point, classically argued by Mill's *On Liberty* (but found in this country at least as far back as the writings of Jefferson): the harm of suppressing free speech is greater than the harm that might be caused by tolerating it. (See "Skokie — the Extreme Test," *Nation*, April 15, 1978.) From a socialist point of view, Cohen's argument needs to be historicized: he was describing correctly the current stage of civil liberties, attained after centuries of human struggle on many fronts. These liberties are at once valuable in themselves, the indispensable components of a more fully free society, and tools for continuing the struggle to achieve this society. Viewed historically, they result from centuries of struggle, progress, and maturation. If the claim to a "universal" right to free speech is indeed a hallmark of the ascending bourgeoisie, it is also one of their contributions to the advancement of humanity.

In daily life, the claim retains its class character: effective free speech is the province of those who have the means to be heard. But as an abstract absolute, the right reflects an ideal of human development. In the ideal, all human beings—from the most humble to the most powerful—are conceived of as rational beings, capable of self-government, and thus entitled to speak and hear all opinions. Viewed thus, this "absolute" is both achievement and goal for the future. A vital American left will begin with free speech, elections, and the right of unions to organize and bargain collectively—and will struggle to extend democracy to all segments of the population, and to the workplace including such areas as employment rights and job security. For socialists, free speech is a central value—not merely because we need to be heard, but also because there is no path to a

socialist society—a society of free, rational human beings—that bypasses people's free, rational judgment.

Socialists have many reasons to feel alienated from American society today. But either we are for the basic freedoms that have already been won, or we are not: one's attitude toward free speech is a kind of litmus test on the left. Conditions may make it extremely difficult for our sectarian comrades to make the passage, but there is only one passage to be made: if the left is to become real in America once more, we will do so only as a part of America. Which means, at the very least, affirming our commitment to one of America's most basic unrealized visions—a society of free and thinking people.

RONALD ARONSON
& SAUL WELLMAN
Detroit, Michigan

EMANUEL GELTMAN Replies: Crazy Like Foxes?

Only a few editors will have seen these comments before publication, so I speak primarily for myself—and, I would hope, for most readers of *Dissent*. Aronson and Wellman are quite right to “anticipate some disagreement.” The issue is hardly a matter of sectarianism. Lord knows, some of us have spent part of our lives in sectarian movements. And, in an early *Dissent*, I went so far as to argue that sectarians have served, and can serve, useful purposes. But sectarians who would wipe me out, assault me physically, terrorize other political groups? Oh, no. Their presumed humanitarian motives do not earn them a single Brownie point.

Free speech, in its most elastic context, is one thing. It may turn my stomach sour, but I am obliged to defend First Amendment rights for Nazis and Klansmen (and equally defend the rights of counter-protesters). But who in his right mind would expect me to engage cross-burners in a reasoned dialogue? Extreme case, of course. But why am I obliged to share friendly or sharp discourse with others (no cross-burners, to be sure) whose minds are choked with Certainty and who might conceivably try to shut me up—if they could?

Why should sectarians of the “left” have extra privileges? I'll give them only this benefit of the doubt: they are not “crazy.” These stalwarts of revolutionary law and order mean what they say. They are politically hazardous, and not at all fit to be considered as a faction of the “left,” “center,” or, more generally, the community of socialists, liberals, whatever. Our “lunatic” sects? Not mine! They may not be our preeminent problem today when Reaganism poses a greater threat to humane programs. Still, it would be absurd to tolerate these putative terrorists, however minuscule or ineffective, because

they *presume* to speak in the name of a higher humanity. To the contrary, those of us who can be bracketed in an amorphous “left” have a special responsibility to criticize those unwholesome fanatics, keep them at arm's length, and denounce them in the strongest terms. Baader-Meinhofers, Red Brigades in Italy, doctrinaires of “revolutionary” violence? They bring nothing but dishonor to any conceivable cause of social justice.

Consider: have the crimes committed in the name of “socialism” been any less terrible than those committed under other banners? Now, with respect to any one individual, you can say, well, here is a decent, if over-zealous, person, and I will try to reason with him. But with movements, tiny as they are, that openly resort to or imply the threat of terror, I can see no common ground for dialogue. They are our opponents, not our “lunatics.”

Let me go back a bit. My son was at the University of Wisconsin during the great student upheavals. He was busted, as so many students were. Once, before he was bailed out, he spent some time in the slammer with fellow demonstrators. I was near Madison at the time and went to see him. “Do you know,” he asked, “that some of these guys I was in jail with talk just like the fascists we are supposed to be fighting? What's the truth?” I answered that he had just learned part of the truth that might have seemed to him narrow-minded had I tried to convince him of it before.

In short, it was one thing to demonstrate against the war, against injustices in school administration, and so forth. It was quite another to prevent Hubert Humphrey from speaking, and still quite another to advocate trashing buildings, or to denounce good, liberal faculty members who were opposed to the war, and were on the side of the students, but opposed despoiling classrooms. Terrorist behavior or talk is anything but socially useful “lunacy.”

Finally, I have yet to hear of a fox so crazy that he penetrates a hen house just to cackle. □

Bad News

Editors:

How prophetic the comment of your “Diplomatic Correspondent” re: Carl Gershman in your Spring issue. Even worse than he imagined. . . .

Gershman feeding spurious material to Buckley to smear Timerman!

WILLIAM SLIVKA
Bronx, N.Y. □

On "Equal Opportunity and the Race of Life"

Editors:

The article in your Spring 1981 issue by Isaac Kramnick, "Equal Opportunity and the Race of Life," is an attack on merit, not meritocracy. Kramnick deplors our "slavish preoccupation with merit and talent" and endorses the idea of assigning students to universities at random. Does he really think that students are assigned on the basis of merit and talent? Would that they were! Those who attend universities are those who can afford to, so assignment is on the basis of money.

When I go to a doctor my life is in his hands and I want the best. If a bridge or building is built, we should have the best architects and engineers. The safety and well-being of the users is at stake. There is a lack of quality in America and we are not producing the best.

The problem with medicine is not that doctors are too competent scientifically; indeed many are incompetent. . . . The problem is lack of social concern on the part of the medical profession, which has consistently fought socialized medicine. They are in the race for money; their values are bourgeois; and they are afraid of competition. Of course, paramedics can do a lot of their work and there should be cooperation instead of competition between doctors and paramedics. Then we would see better health care in all areas and among the lower

classes and more emphasis on preventive medicine instead of on spectacular operations for the few. . . .

The problem is not with merit but with meritocracy, which is people with special talent seeking to be a superior class and greedy for gain. The creed of socialism, however, is "From each according to his abilities and to each according to his needs." Let us build a just society based on this creed but let us not produce a society of mediocrity. And let us work like craftsmen or artists for the joy of the work and for creativity. As Michelangelo said, "A trifle is perfection but perfection is no trifle."

WINTHROP C. WOLFE
Washington, D.C. □

On "Universal Service"

Editors:

The proposal by Benjamin Barber, in your Summer 1981 issue, for "Universal Service," is essentially a proposal for compulsory labor service, which, to put it bluntly, means slavery. It would be this, although the slaves would be paid wages and would serve only a few years. It is an amazing piece of mental confusion to advocate slavery in the name of equality and better citizenship.

Hasn't Mr. Barber heard of the Thirteenth Amendment?

FRANK E. DOHERTY
Chicago, Illinois

BENJAMIN BARBER Replies:

Just as certain gun-lobby zealots like to misuse the Second Amendment (concerned with state militia and national security) to lend a little constitutional luster to their self-interested campaign on behalf of Saturday Night Specials, so libertarians like Mr. Doherty like to misuse the Thirteenth Amendment (concerned in 1865 when it was adopted with the abolition of Negro slavery) to provide a little statist legitimacy for their antistatist campaign against such democratic institutions as military service and the income tax.

But my argument for Universal Citizens' Service is not directed at those who think democracy is an exercise in illegitimacy or that rights can exist in a natural void independent of civic responsibility. It is directed to those worried about the future of democracy and about the continuing erosion of the notion of responsible citizenship—of which Mr. Doherty's letter offers one more grim instant. His logic brings us a step closer to that dread combination of private anarchy (rights for everyone) and public tyranny (duties for no one) that is the undoing of modern democracies. □



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of Disharmony**

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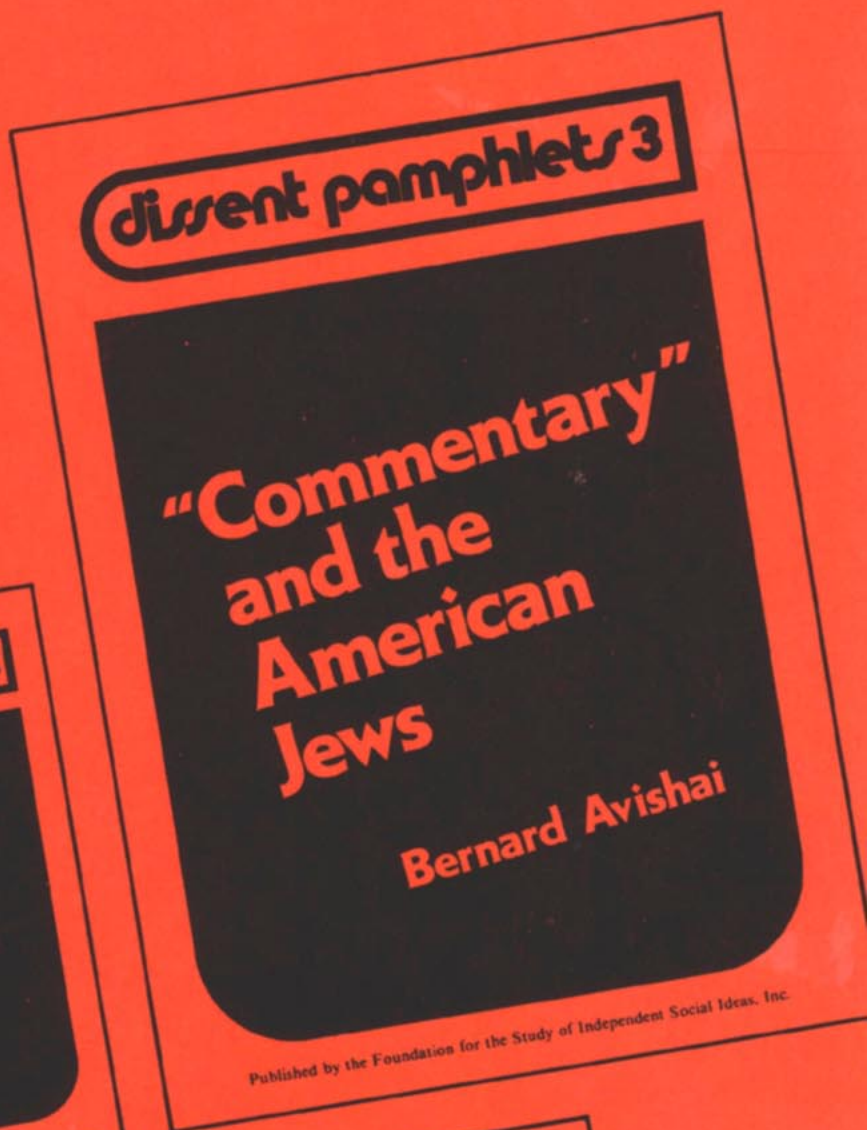
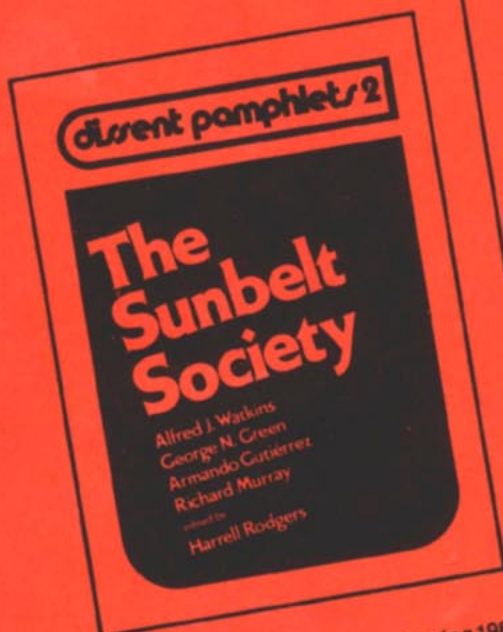
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